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SRI AUROBINDO

VASAVADUTTA

A DRAMATIC ROMANCE

Indian Council for Cultural Relations
New Delhi

1965
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY

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Publishers' Note

Vāsavaduttā exists in several versions, not all of them complete. What seems to be the last complete version has this note at the end (given here in the facsimile reproduction of the last page) : "Revised and recopied between April 8th and April 17th, 1916". An earlier version has a similar entry at the end : "Copied Nov. 2, 1915—written between 18th and 30th October 1915. Completed 30th October. Revised in April 1916. Pondicherry".

Author's Note

The action of the romance takes place a century after the war of the Mahabharata; the capital has been changed to Cowsāmbie; the empire has been temporarily broken and the kingdoms of India are overshadowed by three powers, Magadha in the East ruled by Pradyota, Avunthie in the West ruled by Chunda Mahasegn who has subdued also the southern kings, and Cowsāmbie in the Centre where Yougandharāyan strives by arms and policy to maintain the house of Parikshit against the dominating power of Avunthie. Recently since the young Vuthsa has been invested with the regal power and appeared at Cowsāmbie, Chunda Mahasegn, till then invincible, has suffered rude but not decisive reverses. For the moment there is an armed peace between the two empires.

The fable is taken from Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara (the Ocean of the Rivers of Many Tales) and was always a favourite subject of Indian romance and drama, but some of the circumstances, a great many of the incidents and a few of the names have been altered or omitted and others introduced in their place. Vuthsa, the name of the nation in the tale, is in the play used as a personal name of the King Udayan.

Persons of the Drama

Vuthsa Udayan :	King of Cowsāmbie.
Yougundharāyan :	His Minister, until recently Regent of Cowsāmbie.
Roomunwath :	Captain of his armies.
Alurca :	Young men of Vuthsa's age, his friends and companions.
Vasunthaca :	
The King's Door-Keeper	
Chunda Mahasegn :	King of Avunthie.
Gopālaca :	His sons.
Vicurna :	
Rébha :	Governor of Ujjayinie, the capital of Avunthie.
A Captain of Avunthie	
A servant	
Parīnaca :	Attendant at Udayan's palace.
Ungāricā :	Queen of Avunthie.
Vāsavaduttā :	Daughter of Chunda Mahasegn and Ungāricā.
Umbā :	Her handmaiden.
Munjoolicā :	The new name of Bandhumuthie, the captive Princess of Sourashtra, serving Vāsavaduttā.

Act I

Scene I

An inner room of the palace in Avunthy
Chunda Mahasegn, seated; Gopālaca

Mahasegn

(2) Our strengths retire from one luxurious boy;
(1) Vuthsa Udayan drives my fortunes back
Defeated.

Gopālaca

I have seen him in the ~~battle~~ fight
And I have lived to wonder, he ranges
As lightly through the passages of war
As might the moonbeam feet of some bright laughing girl,
Her skill concealing in her reckless grace,
The measures of a rapid dance.

Mahasegn

If this dawn
Brings its portentous morning to our gates,
Our suns are ended. Yet I had great dreams.
Oudh and Cowsamby were my high-carved doors;
Ganges, Godāvery and Narmadā
In lion race besprayed with sacred dew
The moonlit jasmines in my pleasure grounds.
All this great sunlit continent lay sleeping
At peace beneath the shadow of my brows.
But they were dreams.

Gopālaca

Art thou not great enough
To live them?

Mahasegn

O my son, many high hearts
Must first have striven, many must have failed
Before a great thing can be done on earth;
(2) For one age sees the dreams another lives!
(1) And who shall say then that he is the man?

ACT ONE

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Chunda Mahasegn, seated ; Gopālaca.

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Our strengths retire from one luxurious boy,
Defeated.

Gopālaca

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And who shall say then that he is the man ?
One age has seen the dreams another lives !

Gopālaca

Look up towards the hills where Rudra stands,
His dreadful war-lance pointing to the east.
Fear not the obstacles the gods have strewn.
Why should the mighty man restrain his soul ?
Stretch out thy hand to seize, thy foot to trample,
A Titan's motion.

Mahasegn

High thou soarest now
But with eyes shut to the tempest.

Gopālaca

Suest thou at last
To foemen for the end of haughty strife ?

Mahasegn

That never shall be seen. The boy must fall.

Gopālaca

He is young, noble, beautiful and bold,
But let him fall. We will not bear defeat.

Mahasegn

How shall he fall, my son ? For Heaven-admired
Rudra still guards my stern and high-eyed fates,
But many gods stood smiling at his birth.
Luxmie came full of fortunate days ; Vishnu
Poured down his radiant sanction in the skies
And promised his far stride across the earth ;
Magic Saruswathie between his hands
Laid down her lotus arts.

Gopālaca

The austere gods
Help best and not indulgent deities.
The greatness in him cannot grow to man.
Excused from effort and propped on difficult ascent
Birds that are brilliant-winged fly near to earth.
His hero hours are rare forgetful flights.
Wine, song and dance winging his peaceful days
Throng round his careless soul, it cannot find
The noble leisure to grow great.

Mahasegn

There lives
Our hope. My son, spy out thy enemy's spirit,
Even as his wealth and armies ! Let thy eyes
Find out its weakness and thy hand there strike.

Gopālaca

Thou hast a way to strike ?

Mahasegn

I have a way,
Not noble like the sounding paths of war.

Gopālaca

Take it ; let us stride straight towards our goal.

Mahasegn

Thy arm is asked for.

Gopālaca

It is thine to use.

Mahasegn

Invent some strong device and bring him to us
A captive in Ujjayinie's golden groves.
Shall he not find there a jailor for his heart
To take the miracle of its keys and wear them
Swung on her raiment's border ? Then he lives
Shut up by her close in a prison of joy,
Her and our vassal.

Gopālaca

Brought to the eagle's nest
For the eagle's child, thou giv'st him her heart's prey
To Vāsavaduttā ? King, thy way is good.
Garooda on a young and sleeping Python
Rushing from heaven I'll lift him helpless up
Into the skiey distance of our peaks.
Though it is strange and new and subtle, it is good.
Think the blow struck, thy foeman seized and bound.

Mahasegn

I know thy swiftness and thy gathered leap.
Once here ! his senses are enamoured slaves
To the touch of every beautiful thing. O, there
No hero, but a tender soul at play,
A soft-eyed, mirthful and luxurious youth

Whom all sweet sounds and all sweet sights compel
To careless ecstasy. Wine, music, flowers
And a girl's dawning smile can weave him chains
Of vernal softness stronger than bonds can give
Of unyielding iron. Two lips shall seal his strength,
Two eyes of all his acts be tyrant stars.

Gopālaca

One aid I ask of thee and only one.
My banishment, O King, from thy domains.

Mahasegn

Gopālaca, I banish thee, my child.
Return not with my violent will undone.

SCENE 2

A hall in the palace at Cowsāmbie.

Yougundharāyan ; Roomunwath.

Yougundharāyan

I see his strength lie covered sleeping in flowers ;
Yet is a greatness hidden in his years.

Roomunwath

Nourish not such large hopes.

Yougundharāyan

I know too well
The gliding bane that these young fertile soils
Cherish in their green darkness ; and my cares
Watch to prohibit the nether snake who writhes
Sweet-poisoned, perilous in the rich grass,
Lust with the jewel love upon his hood,
Who by his own crown must be charmed, seized, changed
Into a warm great god. I seek a bride
For Vuthsa.

Roomunwath

Wisely ; but whom ?

Yougundharāyan

One only lives
So absolute in her charm that she can keep
His senses from all straying, the child far-famed
For gifts and beauty, flower by magic fate
On a fierce iron stock.

Roomunwath

Vāsavaduttā,
Avunthie's golden princess ! Hope not to mate
These opposite godheads. Follow Nature's prompting,
Nor with thy human policy pervert
Her simple ends.

Yougundharāyan

Nature must flower into art
And science, or else wherefore are we men ?
Man out of Nature wakes to God's complexities,
Takes her crude simple stuff and by his skill
Turns things impossible into daily miracles.

Roomunwath

This thing is difficult, and what the gain ?

Yougundharāyan

It gives us a long sunlit time for growth;
For we shall raise in her a tender shield
Against that iron victor in the west,
The father's heart taking our hard defence
Forbid the king-brain in that dangerous man.
Then when he's gone, we are his greatness' heirs
In spite of his bold Titan sons.

Roomunwath

He must
Have fallen from his proud spirit to consent.

Yougundharāyan

Another strong defeat and she is ours.

Roomunwath

Blow then the conchs for battle.

Yougundharāyan

I await
Occasion and to feel the gods inclined.

(*to Vuthsa entering*)

My son, thou comest early from thy breezes.

Vuthsa

The dawn has spent her glories and I seek
Alurca and Vasuntha for the harp
With chanted verse and lyric ease until
The golden silences of noon arrive.
See this strange flower I plucked below the stream !
Each petal is a thought.

Yougundharāyan

And the State's cares,
King of Cowsāmbie ?

Vuthsa

Are they not for thee,
My mind's wise father ? Chide me not. See now,
It is thy fault for being great and wise.
What thou canst fashion sovereignly and well,
Why should I do much worse ?

Yougundharāyan

And when I pass ?

Vuthsa

Thy passing I forbid.

Yougundharāyan

Vuthsa, thou art
Cowsāmbie's king, not time's, nor death's.

Vuthsa

O then,
The gods shall keep thee at my strong demand
To be the aged minister of my sons.
This they must hear. Of what use are the gods
If they crown not our just desires on earth ?

Yougundharāyan

Well, play thy time. Thou art a royal child,
And though young Nature in thee dallies long,
I trust her dumb and wiser brain that sees
What our loud thoughts can never reason out,
Not thinking life. She has her secret calls
And works divinely behind play and sleep,
Shaping her infant powers.

Vuthsa

I may then go
And listen to Alurca with his harp ?

Yougundharāyan

Thy will
In small things train, Udayan, in the great
Make it a wrestler with the dangerous earth.

Vuthsa

My will is for delight. They are not beautiful,

This State, these schemings. War is beautiful
And the bright ranks of armoured men and steel
That singing kisses steel and the white flocking
Of arrows that are homing birds of war.
When shall we fight again ?

Yougundharāyan

When battle ripens.
And what of marriage ? Is it not desired ?

Vuthsa

O no, not yet ! At least I think, not yet.
I'll tell thee a strange thing, my father. I shudder,
I know it is with rapture, at the thought
Of women's arms, and yet I dare not pluck
The joy. I think, because desire's so sweet
That the mere joy might seem quite crude and poor
And spoil the sweetness. My father, is it so ?

Yougundharāyan

Perhaps. Thou hast desire for women then ?

Vuthsa

It is for every woman and for none.

Yougundharāyan

One day perhaps thou shalt join war with wedlock
And pluck out from her guarded nest by force
The wonder of Avunthie, Vāsavaduttā.

Vuthsa

A name of leaping sweetness I have heard !
One day I shall behold a marvellous face
And hear heaven's harps defeated by a voice.

Do the gods whisper it ? Dreams are best awhile.

Yougundharāyan

These things we shall consider.

Parīnaca

(*entering*)

Hail, Majesty !

A high-browed wanderer at the portals seeks
Admittance. Tarnished is he with the road,
Alone, yet seems a mighty prince's son.

Vuthsa

Bring him with honour in. Such guests I love.

Yougundharāyan

We should know first what soul is this abroad
And why he comes.

Vuthsa

We'll learn that from his lips.

Yougundharāyan

Hope not to hear truth often in royal courts.
Truth ! Seldom with her bright and burning wand
She touches the unwilling lips of men
Who lust and hope and fear. The gods alone
Possess her. Even our profoundest thoughts
Are crooked to avoid her and from her touch
Crawl hurt into their twilight, often hating her
Too bright for them as for our eyes the sun.
If she dwells here, it is with souls apart.

Vuthsa

All men were not created from the mud.

Yougundharāyan

See not a son of heaven in every worm.
Look round and thou wilt see a world on guard.
All life here armoured walks, shut in. Thou too
Keep, Vuthsa, a defence before thy heart.

Parīnaca brings in Gopālaca.

Gopālaca

Which is Udayan, great Cowsāmbie's king ?

Vuthsa

He stands here. What's thy need from Vuthsa ? Speak.

Yougundharāyan

Roomunwath, look with care upon this face.

Gopālaca

Hail, then, Cowsāmbie's majesty, well borne
Though in a young and lovely vessel ! Hail !

Vuthsa

Thou art some great one surely of this earth
Who com'st to me to live guest, comrade, friend,
Perhaps much more.

Gopālaca

I have fought against thee, king.

Vuthsa

The better ! I am sure thou hast fought well.
Com'st thou in peace or strife ?

Gopālaca

In peace, O king,
And as thy suppliant.

Vuthsa

Ask; I long to give.

Gopālaca

Know first my name.

Vuthsa

Thy eyes, thy face I know.

Gopālaca

I am Gopālaca, Avunthie's son,
Once thy most dangerous enemy held on earth.

Vuthsa

A mighty name thou speakest, prince, nor one
To supplications tuned. Yet ask and have.

Gopālaca

Thou heard'st me well? I am thy foeman's son.

Vuthsa

And therefore welcome more to Vuthsa's heart.
Foemen! they are our playmates in the fight
And should be dear as friends who share our hours
Of closeness and desire. Why should they keep
Themselves so distant? Thou the noblest of them all,
The bravest. I have played with thee, O prince,
In the great pastime.

Gopālaca

This was Vuthsa then!

Yougundharāyan

And wherefore seeks the son of Mahasegn
Hostile Cowsāmbie? Or why suppliant comes
To his chief enemy?

Gopālaca

I should know that brow.
This is thy great wise minister? That is well.
I seek a refuge.

Yougundharāyan

And thou sayst thou art
Avunthie's son?

Gopālaca

Because I am his son.
My father casts me from him and no spot,
Once thought my own, will suffer now my tread.
Therefore I come. Vuthsa Udayan, king,
Grant me some hut, some cave upon thy soil,
Some meanest refuge for my wandering head.
But if thy heart can dwell with fear, as do
The natures of this age, or feed the snake
Suspicion, over gloomier borders send
My broken life.

Youngundharāyan

Vuthsa, beware. His words
Strive to conceal their naked cunning.

Vuthsa

Prince,
What thou demand'st and more than thou demand'st,
Is without question thine. Now, if thou wilt,
Reveal the cause of thy great father's wrath,
But only if thou wilt.

Gopālaca

Because his bidding
Remained undone, my exile was embraced.

Yougundharāyan

More plainly.

Gopālaca

Ask me not. I am ashamed.
Nor should a son unveil his father's fault.
They, even when they tyrannise, remain
Most dear and reverend still, who gave us birth.
This, Vuthsa, know ; against thee I was aimed,
A secret arrow.

Vuthsa

Keep thy father's counsel.
If he shoot arrows and thou art that shaft,
I'll welcome thee into my throbbing breast.
What thou hast asked, I sue to thee to take.
Thou seek'st a refuge, thou shalt find a home :
Thou fleest a father, here a brother waits
To clasp thee in his arms.

Yougundharāyan

Too frank, too noble !

Vuthsa

Come closer. Child of Mahasegn, wilt thou
Be king Udayan's brother and his friend ?
This proud grace wilt thou fling on the bare boon
That I have given thee ? Is it much to ask ?

Gopālaca

To be thy brother was my heart's desire.
Shod with that hope I came.

Vuthsa

Clasp then our hands.
Gopālaca, my play, my couch, my board,
My serious labour and my trifling hours
Share henceforth, govern. All I have is thine.

Gopālaca

Thine is the noblest soul on all the earth.

Vuthsa

Frown not, my father. I obey my heart
Which leaped up in me when I saw his face.
Be sure my heart is wise. Gopālaca,
The sentinel love in man ever imagines
Strange perils for its object. So my minister
Expects from thee some harm. Wilt thou not then
Assure his love and pardon it the doubt ?

Gopālaca

He is a wise deep-seeing statesman, king,
And shows that wisdom now. But I will swear,
But I will prove to thee, thou noble man,
That dearest friendship is my will to him

Thou serv'st and to work on him proudest love.
Is it enough?

Vuthsa

My father, hast thou heard?
A son of kings swears not to lying oaths.

Yougundharāyan

It is enough.

Vuthsa

Then come, Gopālaca,
Into my palace and my heart.

He goes into the palace with Gopālaca.

Yougundharāyan

O life
Besieged of kings! What snare is this? What charm?
There was a falsehood in the Avunthian's eyes.

Roomunwath

He has given himself into his foemen's hands
And he has sworn. He is a prince's son.

Yougundharāyan

Yes, by his sire; but the pale queen Ungāricā
Was to a strange inhuman father born
And from dim shades her victor dragged her forth.

Roomunwath

There's here no remedy. Vuthsa is ensnared
As with a sudden charm.

Yougundharāyan

I'll watch his steps.
Keep thou such bows wherever these two walk
As never yet have missed their fleeing mark.

Roomunwath

Yet was this nobly done on Vuthsa's part.

Yougundharāyan

O, such nobility in godlike times
Was wisdom, but not to our fall belongs.
Sweet virtue now is mother of defeat
And baser, fiercer souls inherit earth.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

A room in the palace at Cowsāmbie.

Alurca; Vasuntha.

Alurca

He'll rule Cowsāmbie in the end, I think.

Vasuntha

Artist, be an observer too. His eyes
Pursue young Vuthsa like a hunted prey
And seem to measure possibility,
But not for rule or for Cowsāmbie care.
To reign's his nature, not his will.

Alurca

This man
Is like some high rock that was suddenly
Transformed into a thinking creature.

Vasuntha

There's
His charm for Vuthsa who is soft as spring,
Fair like a hunted moon in cloud-swept skies,
Luxurious like a jasmine in its leaves.

Alurca

When will this Vuthsa grow to man ? Hard-brained
Roomunwath, deep Yougundharāyan rule;
The State, its arms are theirs.. This boy between
Like a girl's cherished puppet stroked and dandled,

Chid and prescribed the postures it must keep,
Moves like a rhythmic picture of delight
And with his sunny smile he does it all.
Now in our little kingdom with its law
Of beauty and music this high silence comes
And seizes on him. All our acts he rules
And Vuthsa has desired one master more.

Vasuntha

There is a wanton in this royal heart
Who gives herself to all and all are hers.
Perhaps that too is wisdom. For, Alurca,
This world is other than our standards are
And it obeys a vaster thought than ours,
Our narrow thoughts ! The fathomless desire
Of some huge spirit is its secret law.
It keeps its own tremendous forces penned
And bears us where it wills, not where we would.
Even his petty world man cannot rule.
We fear, we blame; life wantons her own way,
A little ashamed, but obstinate still, because
We check but cannot her. O, Vuthsa's wise !
Because he seeks each thing in its own way,
He enjoys. And wherefore are we at all
If not to enjoy and with some costliness
Get dear things done, till rude death interferes,
God's valet moves away these living dolls
To quite another room and better play,—
Perhaps a better !

Alurca

Yet consider this.
Look back upon the endless godlike line.
Think of Parikshit, Janméjoya, think

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13139

Of Sathaneke, then on our Vuthsa gaze.
Glacier and rock and all Himāloy piled !
What eagle peaks ! Now this soft valley blooms;
The cuckoo cries from branches of delight,
The bee sails murmuring its low-winged desires.

Vasuntha

It was to amuse himself God made the world.
For He was dull alone ! Therefore all things
Vary to keep the secret witness pleased.
How Nature knows and does her office well !
What poignant oppositions she combines !
Death fosters life that life may suckle death.
Her certainties are snares, her dreams prevail.
What little seeds she grows into huge fates,
Proves with a smile her great things to be small !
All things here secretly are right; all's wrong
In God's appearances. World, thou art wisely led
In a divine confusion.

Alurca

The Minister
Watches this man so closely, he must think
There is some dangerous purpose in his mind.

Vasuntha

He is the wariest of all ministers
And would suspect two pigeons on a roof
Of plots because they coo.

Alurca

All's possible.

Vuthsa enters with Gopālaca.

Vuthsa

Yes, I would love to see the ocean's vasts.
Are they as grand as are the mountains dumb
Where I was born and grew ? Or is its voice
Like the huge murmur of our forests swayed
In the immense embrace of giant winds ?
We have that in Cowsāmbie.

Gopālaca

Wilt thou show
Them to me, Vindhya's crags, where forests dimly
Climb down towards my Avunthie ?

Vuthsa

We will go
And hunt together the swift fleeing game
Or with our shafts unking the beast of prey.

Gopālaca

If we could range alone wide solitudes,
Not soil them with our din, not with our tread
Disturb great Nature in her animal trance,
Her life of mighty instincts where no stir
Of the hedged restless mind has spoiled her vasts.

Vuthsa

It is a thing I have dreamed of. Alurca, tell
The Minister that we go to hunt the deer
In Vindhya's forests on Avunthie's verge.
That's if my will's allowed.

Alurca goes out to the outer palace.

Vasuntha

He will, Vuthsa,
Allow thy will. Where does it lead thee, king ?

Vuthsa

A scourge for thee or a close gag might help.

Vasuntha

A bandage for my eyes would serve as well.

Vuthsa

Shall we awaken in Alurca's hands
The living voices of the harp ? Or will'st thou
That I should play the heaven-taught airs thou lov'st
On the Gundharva's magical guitar
Which lures even woodland beasts ? For the elephant
Comes trumpeting to the enchanted sound,
A coloured blaze of beauty on the sward
The peacocks dance and the snake's brilliant hood
Lifts rhythmed yearning from the emerald herb.

Gopālaca

Vuthsa Udayan, suffer me awhile
To walk alone, for I am full of thoughts.

Vuthsa

Thou shouldst not be. Cannot my love atone
For lost Avunthie ?

Gopālaca

Always; but a voice
Comes to me often from the haunts of old.

Vasuntha

Returns no dim cloud-messenger to whisper
To thy great father's longing waiting heart
Far from his banished son ?

Gopālaca

Thy satire's forced.

Vasuntha

Thy earnest less ?

Vuthsa

One hour, a long pale loss,
I sacrifice to thy thoughts. When it has dragged past,
Where shall I find thee ?

Gopālaca

Where the flowers rain
Beneath the red boughs on the river's bank.
There will I walk while thou hearst harp or verse.

Vuthsa

Without thee neither harp nor verse can charm.

Gopālaca goes.

The harmony of kindred souls that seek
Each other on the strings of body and mind,
Is all the music for which life was born.
Vasuntha, let me hear thy happy crackling,
Thou fire of thorns that leapest all the day !
Spring, call thy cuckoo.

Vasuntha

Give me fuel then,
Your green young boughs of folly for my fire.

Vuthsa

I give enough I think for all the world.

Vasuntha

It is your trade to occupy the world.
Men have made kings that folly might have food,
For the court gossips over them while they live
And the world gossips over them when they are dead.
That they call history. But our man returns.

Alurca

Do here and in all things, says the minister,
Thy pleasure. But since upon a dangerous verge
This hunt will tread, thy cohorts armed shall keep
The hilly intervals, himself be close
To guard with vigilance his monarch's life
Against the wild beasts and what else means harm.

Vuthsa

That is his care; what he shall do, is good.

Alurca

To lavish upon all men love and trust
Shows the heart's royalty, not the brain's craft.

Vuthsa

I have found my elder brother. Grudge me not,
Alurca, that delight. Thou lov'st me well ?

Alurca

Is it now questioned ?

Vuthsa

Then rejoice with me
That I have found my brother, joy in my joy,
Love with my love, think with my thoughts; the rest
Leave to much older wiser men whose schemings
Have made God's world an office and a mart.
We who are young, let us indulge our hearts.

Alurca

Thou takest all hearts and givest thine to none,
Udayan. Yet is this prince Gopālaca,
This breed from Titans and from Mahasegn,
Hard, stern, reserved. Does he repay thy friendship
As we do ?

Vuthsa

Love itself is sweet enough
Though unreturned; and there are silent hearts.

Vasuntha

Suffer this flower to climb its wayside rock.
Oppose not Nature's cunning who will not
Be easily refused her artist joys.
Fierce deserts round the green oasis yearn
And the chill lake desires the lily's pomp.

Vuthsa

He is the rock, I am the flower. What part
Playst thou in the woodland ?

Vasuntha

A thorn beneath the rose
That from the heavens of desire was born
And men call Vuthsa.

Vuthsa

Poet, satirist, sage,
What other gifts keepst thou concealed within
More than the many that thy outsides show ?

Vasuntha

I squander all and keep none, not like thee
Who trad'st in honey to deceive the world.

Vuthsa

O, earth is honey; let me taste her all.
Our rapture here is short before we go
To other sweetness on some rarer height
Of the upclimbing tiers that are the world.

SCENE 2

A forest-glade in the Vindhya hills.

Vicurna; a Captain.

Vicurna

The hunt rings distant still; but all the way
Troops and more troops besiege. Where is Gopālaca ?

Captain

Our work may yet be rude before we reach
Our armies on the frontier.

Vicurna

That I desire.
O whistling of the arrows ! I have yet
To hear that battle music.

Captain

Someone comes,
For wild things scurry forth.

They take cover. Gopālaca enters.

Vicurna

Whither so swiftly ?
You are near the frontier for a banished man,
Gopālaca.

Gopālaca

Why has my father sent
Thy rash hot boyhood here, imperilling
Both of his sons ? I find not here his wisdom.

Vicurna

There will be danger ? I am glad. None sent me;
I came unasked.

Gopālaca

And also unasking ?

Vicurna

Right.

Gopālaca

Trust me to have thee whipped. But since thou art here !
Where stand the chariots ?

Captain

On our left they wait
Screened by the secret tunnel which the Boar
Tusked through the hill to Avunthie. Torches ready
And men in arms stand in the cavern ranked
They call the cavern of the Elephant
By giants carved. But all the forest passages
The enemy guards.

Gopālaca

There are some he cannot guard.
I know the forest better than their scouts.
When I shall speak of you and clap my hands,
Surround us in a silence armed.

Captain

His men
Resisting ?

Gopālaca

No, we two shall be alone.

Vicurna

Fie ! there will be no fighting ?

Gopālaca

Goblin, off !

They take cover again. Gopālaca goes; then arrives from another side Vuthsa with Vasuntha and Alurca.

Alurca

We lose our escort !

Vasuntha

They lose us, I think.

Alurca

What fate conspires with what hid treachery ?
Our chariot broken, we in woods alone
And the night close.

Vasuntha

Roomunwath guards the paths.

Alurca

The night is close.

Vuthsa

Here I will rest, my friends,
Where all is green and silent ; only the birds
And the wind's whisperings ! Go, Alurca, meet

Our comrades of the hunt ; guide their vague steps
To this green-roofed refuge.

Alurca

It is the best, though bad.
I leave thee with unwarlike hands to guard.

Vasuntha

I am no fighter ; it is known. Run, haste.

Alurca hastens out.

And yet for all your speed, someone will worship
Great Shiva in Avunthie. I hear a tread.

Gopālaca returns.

Vuthsa

Where wert thou all this time, Gopālaca ?

Gopālaca

Far wandering in the woods since a white deer
Like magic beauty drew my ardent steps
Into a green entanglement.

Vasuntha

Simple !
You found there what you sought ?

Gopālaca

No deer, but hunters,
Not of our troop. We spoke of this green glade
Where many wandering paths might lead the king.
In haste I came.

Vasuntha

Greater the haste to go !

Vuthsa

Follow Alurca and come back with him.

Vasuntha

What, cast myself into the forest's hands
To wander and be eaten by the night ?
Come here and bid me then a long farewell.
Are thy eyes open at least ? Is it thou in this
Who movest ? Come, I should know that from thee,
If nothing more.

Vuthsa

Why ask when thou hast eyes ?
Thou seest that mine are open and I walk ;
For no man drives me.

Vasuntha

Walk ! but far away
From thy safe capital.

Vuthsa

What harm ?

Vasuntha

And with
This prince Gopālaca ?

Vuthsa

Suspicions then ?
Why not suspect at once it is my will
To visit Avunthie ?

Vasuntha

So ?

Vuthsa

Not so, but if ?

Vasuntha

Oh, if ! And if return were much less easy
Than the going ?

Vuthsa

Who has talked of easy things ?
With difficulty then I will return.

Vasuntha

I go, king Vuthsa.

Vuthsa

But tell Yougundharāyan
And all who harbour blind uneasy thoughts,
"Whatever seeks me from Fate, man or god,
Leave all between me and the strength that seeks.
War shall not sound without thy prince's leave.
Vuthsa will rescue Vuthsa."

Vasuntha

I will tell,
But know not if he'll hear.

Vuthsa

He knows who is
His sovereign.

Vasuntha

King, farewell.

Vuthsa

I shall. Farewell.

Vasuntha disappears in the forest.

We two have kept our tryst, Gopālaca.
Hang there, my bow; lie down, my arrows. Now
Of you I have no need. O this, O this
Is what I often dreamed, to be alone
With one I love far from the pomp of courts,
Not ringed with guards and anxious friendships round,
Free like a common man to walk alone
Among the endless forest silences,
By gliding rivers and over deciduous hills,
In every haunt where earth, our mother, smiles
Whispering to her children. Let me rest awhile
My head upon thy lap, Gopālaca,
Before we plunge into this emerald world.
Shall we not wander in her green-roofed house
Where mighty Nature hides herself from men,
And be the friends of the great skyward peaks
That call us by their silence, bathe in tarns,
Dream where the cascades leap, and often spend
Slow moonless nights inarmed in leafy huts
Happier than palaces, or in our mood
Wrestle with the fierce tiger in his den
Or chase the deer with wind-swift feet, and share
With the rough forest-dwellers natural food
Plucked from the laden bounty of the trees,
Before we seek the citied haunts of men?
Shall we not do these things, Gopālaca?

Gopālaca

Some day we shall.

Vuthsa

Why some day ? why not now ?
Have I escaped my guards in vain ?

Gopālaca

Not vainly.

Vuthsa

This sword encumbers ; take it from me, friend,
And fling it there upon the bank.

Gopālaca

It is far.
I keep my arms lest some wild thing invade
These green recesses.

Vuthsa

Keep thy arms and me.
O, this is good to be among the trees
With thee to guard me and no soul besides.

Gopālaca

Thyself thou hast given wholly into my hands.

Vuthsa

Yes, take me, brother.

Gopālaca

I shall use the trust
And yet deserve it.

Vuthsa

I love thee well, Gopālaca.
How dost thou love me ?

Gopālaca

It was hard to speak,
Now I can tell it. As a brother might
Elder and jealous, as a mother loves
Her beautiful flower-limbed boy or grown man yearns
Over some tender girl, his sister, comrade, child,
In all these ways, but many more besides,
But always jealously.

Vuthsa

Why ?

Gopālaca

Because, Vuthsa,
I'ld have thee for my own and not as in
Thy city where a thousand shared thy rays
Who were strangers to me. In my own domain,
Part of a world that's old and dear to me,
Where thou shalt be no king, but Vuthsa only
And I can bind with many dearest ties
Heaped on thee at my will. This, Vuthsa, I desired
And therefore I have brought thee to this glade.

Vuthsa

And therefore I have come to thee alone.

Gopālaca

Thou must go farther.

Vuthsa

Yes ? Then haste. Was that
A clank of arms amid the silent trees ?

He makes as if to rise, but Gopālaca restrains him.

Gopālaca

Thy escort.

Vuthsa

Mine ?

Gopālaca

My father sends for thee.
I seize upon thee, Vuthsa, thou art mine,
My captive and my prize. I'll bear thee far
As Heaven's great eagle bore thy mother once
Rapt to his unattainable high hills.

As he speaks the armed men appear.

Swift, captain, swift ! I hold the royal boy.
On to the tunnel of the Boar.

Captain

Haste, haste !
There is a growing rumour all around.

Gopālaca

Care not for that, but follow me and guard.

They disappear among the trees. After a few moments Vasuntha arrives.

Vasuntha

The forest lives with sound. It is too late.
The thing is done.

Yougundharāyan, Roomunwath, Alurca and others break in from all sides.

Yougundharāyan

Where is King Vuthsa ? where ?
His bow hangs there ! his sword and arrows lie !

Vasuntha
(*indifferently*)

I know not.

Alurca

Know not ! Thou wast with him !

Vasuntha

No.
He sent me from him. I think he's travelling
To Shiva in Avunthie.

Alurca

And thou laugh'st ?
Untimely jester !

Yougundharāyan

Impetuously pursue !
The forest ways and mountain openings flood
That flee to Avunthie. They can yet be seized.

Vasuntha

Hear first king Vuthsa's message and command :
"Whatever seeks me from Fate, man or beast,
Let not war sound without thy prince's leave.
Vuthsa will rescue Vuthsa."

Roomunwath

Jestest thou yet,
Or was this madness ? or careless levity ?

Yougundharāyan

See how the lion's cub breaks out, Roomunwath,
Whom we so guarded in our close control,
To measure with the large and dangerous world
The bounding rapture of his youth and force.
He throws himself into his foeman's lair
Alone and scorning every aid. I guess
His purpose, but it's rash, it's rash. What if
He failed ? This boy and iron Mahasegn !
And yet we must obey.

Roomunwath

He is not yet
Beyond the borders. But we'll seek him out
Armed in Avunthie. To the border speed !
They may be seized before they cross it still.

All depart in a tumult of haste except Yougundharāyan and Alurca.

Yougundharāyan

It will be vain. At least my spies shall pierce
Their inmost chambers, even in his prison
My help be near.

SCENE 3

Avunthie, a wooded hill-side overlooking the plain.

Gopālaca in a chariot with Vuthsa;
armed men surround them.

Gopālaca

Arrest our wheels. Those are our army's lights
That climb to us like fireflies from the plain.

Vuthsa
(*awakened from sleep*)

Is this Avunthie ?

Gopālaca

We have passed her bounds.

Vuthsa

So, thou dear traitor, this thou from the first
Cam'st planning ?

Gopālaca

This and more for which it was done.

Vuthsa

Thou bearst me to thy father's house ?

Gopālaca

Where thou
Shalt lie a jewel guarded carefully
Close to the dearest treasures of our house,
Nor all Yougundharāyan's wiles prevail

To take thee from our guard.

Vuthsa

I must be cooped,
It seems, and guarded in a golden cage,
As I was watched in Cowsāmbie once.
So all men think to do their will with me.
But now I warn you all that I will have
My freedom and will do my own dear will
By fraud or violence greater than your own.

Gopālaca

Thou never ! If thou hadst thy bow indeed !

Vuthsa

Thou hadst me for the taking. I will break out
As easily.

Gopālaca

Thou shalt find the evasion hard,
Such keepers shall enring thy steps.

Vuthsa

But I will,
And carry with me something costlier far
Than what thou stealest from Cowsāmḅie's realm.
For I will have revenge.

Gopālaca

No wealth we have
More precious than the thing I seize today.
Therefore thy boast is vain.

Vuthsa

That I will see.

Vicurna passes.

Was't not thy brother rode behind our car ?
He passes now; call him.

Gopālaca

Vicurna, here !

Vuthsa

Come near, embrace me, brother of Gopālaca,
Loved for his sake, now for thy own desired
Since I beheld thee, son of Mahasegn.

Vicurna

Vuthsa Udayan, in the battle's front
I had hoped to meet thee and compel thy praise
As half thy equal in the fight. But this
Is nearer, this is better.

Vuthsa

Thou art fair to see.
Thy father has two noble sons. Are there
No others of your great upspringing stock ?

Gopālaca

Only a sister.

Vuthsa

The world has heard of her.

Gopālaca

Thou shalt behold.

Vuthsa

Oh, then, it is all gain
That awaits me in Avunthie. O the night
With all her glorious stars and from the trees
Millions of shrill cigalas peal one note,
A thunderous melody ! Shall we be soon
In the golden city ? But it will be night
And I shall hardly see her famous fanes.

Gopālaca

Dawn will have passed overtaking in her skies
Our chariots long before Ujjayinie's seen.
The vanguard nears; make haste to join with them.
Roomunwath's cohorts should tread close behind.

Vuthsa

They will not come. My fate must ride with me
Unhindered to Ujjayinie.

Gopālaca

Captains, march.
Spur towards my father swift-hooved messengers
To cry aloud to him the prize we bring.
Shiva has smiled on us.

Vuthsa

Vishnu on me.
Vicurna, mount by us and talk to me.

ACT THREE

AVUNTHIE; IN THE PALACE

SCENE I

A room in the royal apartments.
Mahasegn; Ungāricā.

Mahasegn

I conquer still though not with glorious arms.
He's seized! the young victorious Vuthsa's mine,
A prisoner in my hands.

Ungāricā
(*laughing*)

Thou holdst the sun
Under thy armpit as the tailed god did.
What wilt thou do with it?

Mahasegn

Make it my moon
And shine by him upon the eastern night.

Ungāricā

Thou canst?

Mahasegn

Loved sceptic of my house, I can.
Have I not done all things I longed for yet
Since out of thy dim world I dragged thee alarmed

Into our sun and breeze and azure skies
By force, my fortune ?

Ungāricā

Yes, by force; but here
By force it was not done. Wilt thou depart
From thy own nature, Chunda Mahasegn,
And hop'st for victory ?

Mahasegn

Thou art my strength, my fortune,
But not my counsellor.

Ungāricā

No, I obey and watch.
It is enough for me in your strange world.
For by your light I cannot guide myself.
Man is a creature, blinded by the sun,
Who errs by vision; but the world to you
That's darkness, they who walk there, they have sight.
Such am I; for the shades have reared my soul.

Mahasegn

What dost thou see ?

Ungāricā

That Vuthsa is too great
For thy greatness, too cunning for thy cunning; he
Will bend not to thy pressure.

Mahasegn

Thou hast bent,
The Titaness ! this is a tender boy
As soft as summer dews or as the lily

That yields to every gentle pushing wave.
A hero ? yes; all Aryan boys are that.

Ungāricā

Thy daughter, Vāsavaduttā, is the wave
That shall o'erflow this lily !

Mahasegn

Thou hast seen ?

Ungāricā

'Tis good; it is the thing my heart desires.
My daughter shall have empire.

Mahasegn

No, thy son.

Ungāricā

No matter which. The first man of the age
Will occupy her heart; the pride and love
That are her faults will both be satisfied.
She will be happy.

Mahasegn

Call her here, my queen.
She shall be taught the thing she has to do.

Ungāricā

Her heart will teach her. Veena, call to me
The princess.

Mahasegn

Oh, the heart, it is a danger,
A madness. Let the thinking mind prevail.

Ungāricā

We're women, king.

Mahasegn

No, princesses. My daughter
Has dignity, pride, wisdom, noble hopes.
She will not act as common natures do.

Ungāricā

Love will unseat them all and put them down
Under his flower-soft feet.

Mahasegn

Thou hast chosen ever
To oppose my thoughts.

Ungāricā

It is their poor revenge
Who in their acts must needs obey. Thy lesson, King !

Vāsavaduttā enters and bows
down to her parents.

Let royal wisdom teach a woman's brain
To use for statecraft's ends her dearest thoughts.

Mahasegn

My daughter, Vāsavaduttā, my delight,
Now is thy hour to pay the long dear debt
Thou ow'st thy parents from whom thou wast made.
Hear me; thy brain is quick, will understand.
Vuthsa, Cowsāmbie's king, my rival, foe,
My fate's high stumbling-block, captive today
Comes to Avunthie. I mean that he shall be

Thy husband, Vāsavaduttā, and thy slave.
By thee he must become, who now resists,
My vassal even as other monarchs are.
Then shall thy father's fates o'erleap their bounds,
Then rule thy house, thy nation all this earth !
This is my will; my daughter, is it thine ?

Vāsavaduttā

Father, thy will is mine, even as 'tis fate's.
Thou givest me to whom thou wilt; what share
In this have I but only to obey ?

Mahasegn

A greater part that makes thee my ally
And golden instrument; for without thee
I have no hold on Vuthsa. Thou, my child,
Must be the chain to bind him to my throne,
Thou my ambassador to win his mind
And thou my viceroy over his subject will.

Vāsavaduttā

Will he submit to this ?

Mahasegn

Yes, if thou choose.

Vāsavaduttā

I choose, my father, since it is thy will.
That thou shouldst rule the world is all my wish,
My nation's greatness is my dearest good.

Mahasegn

Thou hast kept my lessons; lose them not.
O thou art not as common natures are;

Thou wilt not put thy own ambitions first,
Nor justify a blind and clamorous heart.

Vāsavaduttā

My duty to my country and my sire
Shall rule me.

Mahasegn

I'll not teach thy woman's tact
How it should mould this youth nor warn thy will
Against the passions of the blood. The heart
And senses over common women rule;
Thou hast a mind.

Vāsavaduttā

Father, this is my pride,
That thou ennoblest me to be an engine
Of thy great fortunes; that alone I am.

Mahasegn

Thou wilt not yield then to the heart's desire ?

Vāsavaduttā

Let him desire, but I will nothing yield.
I am thy daughter; greatest kings should sue
And take my grace as an unhoped-for joy.

Mahasegn

Thou art my pupil; statecraft was not wasted
Upon thy listening brain. Thou seest, my queen ?

Ungāricā

Thou hast made thy treaty with thy daughter, King ?
As if this babe could understand ! Go, go

And leave me with my child. For I will speak to her
Another language.

Mahasegn

But no breath against
My purpose.

Ungāricā

Fearst thou that?

Mahsegn

No; speak to her.

He goes out from the chamber.

Ungāricā
(*drawing Vāsavaduttā into her arms*)

Rest here, my child, to whom another bosom
Will soon be refuge. Thou hast heard the King,
Hear now thy mother. Thou wilt know, my bliss,
The fiercest sweet ordeal that can seize
A woman's heart and body. O my child,
Thou wilt house fire, thou wilt see living gods;
And all thou hast thought and known will melt away
Into a flame and be reborn. What now
I speak, thou dost not understand, but wilt
Before many nights have kept thy sleepless eyes.
My child, the flower blooms for its flowerhood only
And not to make its parent bed more high.
Not for thy sire thy mother brought thee forth,
But thy dear nature's growth and heart's delight
And for a husband and for children born.
My child, let him who clasps thee be thy god

That thou mayst be his goddess; let your wedded arms
Be heaven; let his will be thine and thine
Be his, his happiness thy regal pomp.
O Vāsavaduttā, when thy heart awakes
Thou shalt obey thy sovereign heart, nor yield
Allegiance to the clear-eyed selfish gods.
Do now thy father's will; the god awake
Shall do his own. Yes, tremble and yet fear
Nothing. Thy mother watches over thee, child.

She puts Vāsavaduttā
from her and goes out.

Vāsavaduttā

I love her best, but do not understand :
My mind can always grasp my father's thoughts.
If I must wed, it shall be one I rule.
Vuthsa ! Vuthsa Udayan ! I have heard
Only a far-flung name. What is the man ?
A flame ? A flower ? High like Gopālaca
Or else some golden fair and soft-eyed youth ?
I have a fluttering in my heart to know.

SCENE 2

The same.

Mahasegn ; Ungāricā ; Gopālaca ; Vuthsa.

Gopālaca

King of Avunthie, Chunda Mahasegn,
Thy will I have performed. Thy dangerous foe,
The boy who rivalled thy ripe victor years
I lay, thy captive, at thy feet.

Mahasegn

Gopālaca,
Thou hast done well ; thou art indeed my son.
Vuthsa,—

Vuthsa

Hail, monarch of the West. We have met
In equal battle ; it has pleased me now to approach
Thy greatness otherwise.

Mahasegn

Pleased thee, vain youth !
No, but thy fate indignant that thou strovest
Against much prouder fortunes.

Vuthsa

Think it so.
I am here. What wouldst thou with me, King, or wherefore
Hast thou by violence brought me to thy house ?

Mahasegn

To adore me as sole master, king and lord,
Assuming my great yoke as all have done

From Indus to the South.

Vuthsa

Thou art in error.
Thou hast not great Cowsāmbie's monarch here,
But Vuthsa only, Sathaneka's son,
Who sprang from sires divine.

Mahasegn

And where then dwells
Cowsāmbie's youthful majesty if not
In thee, its golden vessel ?

Vuthsa

Where my throne
In high Cowsāmbie stands. Thou shouldst know that.
There is a kingship which exceeds the king ;
For Vuthsa unworthy, Vuthsa captive, slain,
This is not captive, this cannot be slain.
It far transcends our petty human forms,
It is a nation's greatness. That, O king,
Was once Parikshit, that Urjoona's seed,
Janaméjoya, that was Sathaneka,
That Vuthsa ; and when Vuthsa is no more,
That shall live deathless in a hundred kings.

Mahasegn

Thou speakest like the unripe boy thou seemst,
With thoughts high-winging ; grown minds keep to earth's
More humble sureness and prefer to touch.
I am content to have thy gracious body here,
This earth of kingship ; for with that I deal
And not with any high and formless[1] thought.

[1] unseen

Vuthsa

My body ! deal with it. It is thy slave
And captive by thy choice, as by my own.
What thou canst do with Vuthsa, do, O king.
In nothing will I pledge Cowsāmbie's majesty,
But Vuthsa is thy own and in thy hands.
Him I defend not from thy iron will.

Mahasegn

My prisoner, thou canst not so escape
My purpose.

Vuthsa

I embrace it. If escape
I simply meant, I should not now be here.
'Tis not by bars or gates I can be bound.

Mahasegn

But I will give thee other jailors, boy,
Surer than my armed sentries, against whom
Thou dar'st not lift thy helpless hands.

Vuthsa

Find such,
I am content.

Mahasegn

Humble thy bearing proud !
Be Vuthsa or be great Cowsāmbie's king,
Thou art here my captive only and my slave.

Vuthsa

I accept thy stern rebuke as I accept
Whatever state the wiser gods provide

And bend my mood and action to their thought.

Mahasegn

Vuthsa, thou hast opposed my sovereign will
Who meant to make all lands my private plot,
Fields for my royal tilling. Thou hast fought
And that by war I could not tame thee, hold
As thy most unexampled glory. Now
My proud resistless fortune brings thee here ;
Thou must, young hero, brook enslaved my will.
Thou knowst the law ; whoever offers empire
A sacrifice to the high-seated gods,
Him must his subject kings as menials serve ;
And this compelled have many proud lords done
Whose high beginnings disappear in Time.
But now I will make all my royal days
A high continual solemn sacrifice of kingship.
Thee, who art Bharuth's heir, a high-throned son
Of emperors and my equal in the world,
All thy long time I will superbly keep
Ornament and emblem of my arrogant greatness,
A royal serf of my proud house. Thee, Vuthsa,
As fitting thy yet tender years, I make
My daughter's servant, by her handmaidens
Guarded, thy jailors firm whose gracious cordon
Not even thy courage can transgress. To this
Dost thou consent ?

Vuthsa

Not only I consent,
But welcome with a proud aspiring mind,
Since to be Vāsavaduttā's servitor
Is honour, happiness and fortune's grace.
My greatness this shall raise, not cast it down,

King Mahasegn.

Mahasegn

Lead then, Gopālaca,
My gift, this captive, to thy sister's feet.
He has a music that desires the gods,
A brush that outdoes Nature and a song
The luminous choristers of heaven have taught.
All this she can command or she can take ;
For all he has, is hers. Thou smilest, boy ?

Vuthsa

What thou hast said is simply truth. And yet
I smiled to see how strong and arrogant minds
Dream themselves masters of the things they do.

Gopālaca and Vuthsa go out by a door leading inward to Vāsavaduttā's apartments.

Mahasegn

'Tis only a charming boy, Ungāricā,
Who vaunts and yields !

Ungāricā

What he has shown thee, King,
Thou seest.

Mahasegn

Wilt thou lend next this graceful child,
Almost a girl in beauty, thoughts profound
And practised subtleties ? I have done well,
Was deeply inspired.

He goes from the chamber towards the outer palace.

Ungāricā
(*looking after him*)

For him thou hast and her.
Our own ends seeking Heaven's ends we serve.

SCENE 3

A room in Vāsavaduttā's apartment.
Vāsavaduttā ; Munjoolicā ; Umbā.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou hast seen him ?

Munjoolicā

Yes.

Vāsavaduttā

Then speak, thou perverse silence,
Thou canst chatter when thou wilt.

Munjoolicā

What shall I say
Except that thou art always fortunate
Since thou hast deigned to bless the earth,[1]
O living Luxmie ? Beauty, wealth and joy
Run overpacked into thy days, and grandeurs
Unmeasured. Now the greatest king on earth
Is given thy servant.

Vāsavaduttā

That's the greatest king's
High fortune and not mine. For nothing now
Can raise me higher than I am whose father
Is sovereign over greatest kings. Nothing are these
And what I long to know thou wilt not tell.
What is he like ?

---

[1] Since first thy soft feet moved on our earth

Munjoolicā

I have seen the god of love
Wearing a golden human body.

Vāsavaduttā
(*with a pleased smile*)

So fair ?

Munjoolicā
As thou art and even more.

Vāsavaduttā

More !

Munjoolicā

Cry not out.
His eyes are proud and smiling like the gods',
His voice is like the sudden call of Spring.

Vāsavaduttā
O dear to me even as myself, wear this.

She puts her own chain round her neck.

Munjoolicā
That is my happiness ; keep thy gifts.

Vāsavaduttā

Think them
My love around thy neck. Thou hast seen truly ?
It was not spoken to beguile my mind ?

Then tell me all you saw there, dearest one;
Not that these things I care for, but would know.

Munjoolicā
(*showing Gopālaca and Vuthsa who enter*)

Let thy eyes care not then, yet see.

Vāsavaduttā

My brother,
Long wast thou far from me.

Gopālaca

For thy sake I was far.
Much have I flung, my sister, at thy feet
Nor thought my gifts were worthy of thy smile,
Not even Sourashtra's conquered daughter here,
But now I give indeed. This is that famous
Vuthsa Udayan, great Cowsāmbie's King,
Brought here by me to serve thee as thy slave,
Thy royal serf, musician, singer, page.
Look on him, tell me if I have deserved.

Vāsavaduttā

Much love, dear brother, not that any prize
I value as of worth for such as we,
But thy love gives it price.

Gopālaca

My love for both.
My gift is precious to me, for my heart
Possessed him long before my hands have seized.
Then love him well, for so thou lov'st me twice.

Vāsavaduttā
(*looking covertly at Vuthsa*)

Although my slave, dear then and prized.

Gopālaca

Are we not all
Thy servants ? The wide costly world is less,
My sister, than thy noble charm and grace
And beauty and the sweetness of thy soul
Deserve, O Vāsavaduttā.

Vāsavaduttā

Is it so ?

Gopālaca
My sister, thou wast born from Luxmie's heart.
And we thy brothers feel in thee, not us,
Our father's lordly star inherited
And in thy girdle all the conquered earth.

Vāsavaduttā
I know it, brother.

Gopālaca
From thy childhood, yes,
Thou seemdst to know, thou heldst rule carelessly ;
But since thou knowest, queen, assume thy fiefs,
Cowsāmbie and Ayodhyā, for thy house !

Vāsavaduttā
(*glancing at Vuthsa and avoiding his gaze*)

Since he's my slave, they are already mine.

Gopālaca

Nay, understand me, sister : make them thine.
Thou, Vuthsa, serve thy mistress and obey.

He goes out.

Vāsavaduttā

He is a boy, a golden marvellous boy.
I am surely older ! I can play with him.
There is no fear, no difficulty at all.

(*to Vuthsa*)

What is thy name ? I'll hear it from thy lips.

Vuthsa

Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou shudderest, Vuthsa ; dost thou fear ?

Vuthsa

Perhaps ; there is a fear in too much joy.

Vāsavaduttā

(*smiling*)

I did not hear. My brother loves thee well.
Take comfort. If thou serve me faithfully,
Thou hast no cause for any grief at all.
Thou art Cowsāmbie's king,—

Vuthsa

Men call me so.

Vāsavaduttā

And now my servant.

Vuthsa

That my heart repeats.

Vāsavaduttā
(*smiling*)

I did not hear. Cowsāmbie's king, my slave,
What canst thou do to please me ?

Vuthsa

Dost thou choose
To know the songs that shake the tranquil gods
Or hear on earth the harps of heaven ? dost thou
Desire the line and hue of living truth
That makes earth's shadows pale ? or wilt thou have
The infinite abysmal silences
Made vocal, clothed with form ? These things at birth
The Kinnarie, Vidyādhar and Gundharva
Around me crowding on Himāloy dumb
Gave to the silent god that smiled in me
Before my outer mind held thought. All these
I can make thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, I take all these,
All thy life's ornaments that thou wearst, for mine
And am not satisfied.

Vuthsa

Dost thou desire
The earth made thine by my victorious bow ?

Send me then forth to battle ; earth is thine.

Vāsavaduttā

I take the earth and am not satisfied.

Vuthsa

Say thou what thing shall please thee in thy slave,
What thou desir'st from Vuthsa ?

Vāsavaduttā

Do I know ?
Not less than all thou hast and all thou canst
And all thou art.

Vuthsa

All's thine.

Vāsavaduttā

I speak and hear,
And know not what I say nor what thou meanst.

Vuthsa

The deepest things are those thought seizes not ;
Our spirits live their hidden meaning out.

Vāsavaduttā
(*after a troubled silence in which*
she tries to recover herself)

I know not how we passed into this strain.
Such words are troubling to the mind and heart ;
Leave them.

Vuthsa

They have been spoken.

Vāsavaduttā

Let them rest.

Vuthsa, my slave, who promisest me much,
Great things thou offerest, small things I'll demand
From thee, yet hard. Since he's my prisoner,
Munjoolicā and Umbā, guard this boy;
You are his jailors. When I have need of him,
Then bring him to me. Go, Vuthsa, to thy room.

Vuthsa makes an obeisance and touches her feet.

What dost thou? It is not permitted thee.

Vuthsa
(*letting his touch linger*)

Not this? 'Tis hard.

Vāsavaduttā
(*troubled*)

Thou art too bold a slave.

Vuthsa

Let me be earth beneath thy tread at least.

Vāsavaduttā

Oh, take him from me; I have enough of him!
Thou, Umbā, see he bribes thee not or worse.

Umbā

I will be bribed to make thee smart for that.
Where shall we put him ? In the tower-room
Closing the terrace where thou walkst when moonlight
Sleeps on the sward ?

Vāsavaduttā

There ; 'tis the nearest.

Umbā

(*taking Vuthsa's hand*)

Come.

They go out with Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

Will he charm me from my purpose with a smile ?
How beautiful he is, how beautiful !
There is a fear, there is a happy fear.
But he is mine, his eyes confessed my sway ;
Surely I shall do all my will with him.
I sent him from me, for his words troubled me
And still delighted. They have a witchery,—
No, not his words, but voice. 'Tis not his voice,
Nor yet his smile, his face, his flower-soft eyes
And yet it is all these and something more.

(*shaking her head*)

I fear it will be difficult after all.

SCENE 4

The tower-room beside the terrace.

Vuthsa on a couch.

Vuthsa

All that I dreamed or heard of her, her charm
Exceeds. She's mine ! she has shuddered at my touch ;
Thrice her eyes faltered as they gazed in mine.

He lies back with closed eyes ; Munjoolicā enters and contemplates him.

Munjoolicā

O golden Love ! thou art not of this earth.
He too is Vāsavaduttā's ! All is hers,
As I am now and one day all the earth.
Vuthsa, thou sleep'st not, then.

Vuthsa

Sleep jealous waits
Finding another image in my eyes.

Munjoolicā

Thou art disobedient. Wast thou not commanded
To sleep at once ?

Vuthsa

Sleep disobeys, not I.
But thou too wakest, yet no thoughts should have
To keep thy lids apart.

Munjoolicā

How knowst thou that ?
I am thy jailor and I walk my rounds.

Vuthsa

Bright jailor, thou art jealous without cause.
Who would escape from heaven's golden bars ?
Thy name is Munjoolicā ? so is thy form
A bower of the graceful things of earth.

Munjoolicā

I had another name but it has ceased,
Forgotten.

Vuthsa

Thou wast then Sourashtra's child ?

Munjoolicā

I am still that royalty clouded, even as thou art
Captive Cowsāmbie. Me Gopālaca
In battle seized, brought a disdainful gift
To Vāsavaduttā.

Vuthsa

Since our fates are one,
Should we not be allies ?

Munjoolicā

For what bold purpose ?

Vuthsa

How knowest thou I have one ?

Munjoolicā

Were I a man !

Vuthsa

Wouldst thou have freedom ? wilt thou give me help ?

Munjoolicā

In nothing against her I love and serve.

Vuthsa

No, but conspire to serve and love her best
And make her queen of all the Aryan earth.

Munjoolicā

My payment ?

Vuthsa

Name it thyself, when all is ours.

Munjoolicā

Content ; it will be large.

Vuthsa

However large.

Munjoolicā

Now shall I be avenged upon my fate.
I know what thy heart asks ; too openly
Thou carriest the yearning in thy eyes.
Vuthsa, she loves thee as the half-closed bud
Thrills to the advent of a wonderful dawn
And like a dreamer half-awake perceives
The faint beginnings of a sunlit world.
Doubt not success more than that dawn must break ;
For she is thine.

Vuthsa

Take my heart's gratitude
For the sweet assurance.

Munjoolicā

I am greedy. Only
Thy gratitude ?

Vuthsa

What wouldst thou have ?

Munjoolicā

The ring
Upon thy finger, Vuthsa, for my own.

Vuthsa
(*putting it on her finger*)

It shall live happier on a fairer hand.

Munjoolicā
Since thou hast paid me instantly and well,
I will be zealous, Vuthsa, in thy cause.
But my great bribe is in the future still.

Vuthsa
Claim it in our Cowsāmbie.

Munjoolicā

There indeed.
Sleep now.

Vuthsa

By thy good help I now shall sleep.

Munjoolicā goes out.

Music is sweet ; to rule the heart's rich chords
Of human lyres much sweeter. Art's sublime
But to combine great ends more sovereign still,
Accepting danger and difficulty to break
Through proud and violent opposites to our will.
Song is divine, but more divine is love.

SCENE 5

A room in Vāsavaduttā's apartments.

Vāsavaduttā

I govern no longer what I speak and do.
Is this the fire my mother spoke of ? Oh,
It is sweet, it is sweet. But I will not be mastered
By any equal creature. Let him serve
Obediently and I will load his lovely head
With costliest favours. He's my own, my own,
My slave, my toy to play with as I choose,
And shall not dare to play with me. I think he dares ;
I do not know, I think he would presume.
He's gentle, brilliant, bold and beautiful.
I'll send for him and chide and put him down,
I'll chide him harshly ; he must not presume.
O, I have forgotten almost my father's will,
Yet it was mine. Before I lose it quite,
I will compel a promise from the boy.
Will it be hard when he is all my own ?

(*she calls*)

Umbā ! Bring Vuthsa to me from his tower.
His music is a voice that cries to me,
His songs are chains he hangs around my heart.
I must not hear them often ; I forget
That I am Vāsavaduttā, that he is
My house's foe, and only Vuthsa feel,
Think Vuthsa only, while my captive heart
Beats in world-Vuthsa and on Vuthsa throbs.
This must not be.

Umbā brings in Vuthsa and retires.

Go, Umbā. Vuthsa, stand
Before me.

Vuthsa

It is my sovereign's voice that speaks.

Vāsavaduttā

Be silent ! Lower thy eyes ; they are too bold
To gaze on me, my slave.

Vuthsa

Blame not my eyes,
They follow the dumb motion of a heart
Uplifted to adore thee.

Vāsavaduttā
(*with a shaken voice*)

Dost thou really
Adore me, Vuthsa ?

Vuthsa

Earth's one goddess, yes.

Vāsavaduttā
(*mildly*)

But, Vuthsa, men adore with humble eyes
Upon their deity's feet.

Vuthsa

Oh, let me so
Adore thee then, thus humble at thy feet,
Their sleeping moonbeams in my eyes, and place

My hands in Paradise beneath these flowers
That bless too oft the chill unheeding earth.
Let this not be forbidden to thy slave.
So let me worship, and the carolling of thy speech
So listen.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, thou must not presume.

Vuthsa

O even when faint thy voice, thy every word
Reaches my soul.

Vāsavaduttā

Wilt thou not let me free ?

Vuthsa

Yes, if thou bid ; but do not.

Vāsavaduttā

(*bending down to caress his hair*)

If really
And as my slave thou adorest, nothing more,
I will not bid.

Vuthsa

What more, when this means all.

Vāsavaduttā

But if thou serve me, is not all thou hast
Mine, mine ? Why dost thou, Vuthsa, keep from me
My own ?

Vuthsa
Take all; claim all.

Vāsavaduttā
(*collecting herself*)
Cowsāmbie first.

Vuthsa
It shall be thine, a jewel for thy feet.

Vāsavaduttā
Thy kingdom, Vuthsa, for my will to rule.

Vuthsa
It shall be thine, the garden of thy pomp.

Vāsavaduttā
Shall?

Vuthsa
Is it not far? We must go there, my queen,
Thou to receive and I to give.

Vāsavaduttā
I wish
To be there. But, Udayan, thou must vow,
And the word bind thee, that none else shall be
Cowsāmbie's queen and thou my servant live
Vowed to obedience underneath my throne.

Vuthsa
Thou only shalt be over my heart a queen,
Yes, if thou wilt, the despot of my thoughts,

My hopes, my aims, but I will not obey
If thou command disloyalty to thee,
My sweet, sole sovereign.

Vāsavaduttā
(*smiling*)

This reserve I yield.

(*hesitatingly*)

But Vuthsa, if as subject of my sire,
High Chunda Mahasegn, I bid thee rule?

Vuthsa

My queen, it will be void.

Vāsavaduttā

Void? And thy vow?

Vuthsa

Would it not be disloyalty in me
To serve another sovereign?

Vāsavaduttā
(*vexed, yet pleased*)

O, thou play'st with me.

Vuthsa

No, queen. What's wholly mine, that wholly take.
But this belongs to many other souls.

Vāsavaduttā

To whom?

Vuthsa

Their names are endless. Bharuth first
Who ruled the Aryan earth that bears his name,
And great Dushyanta and Pururavus'
Famed warlike son and all their peerless line,
Urjoona and Parikshit and his sons
Whom God descended to enthrone, and all
Who shall come after us, my heirs and thine
Who choosest me, and a great nation's multitudes,
And the Kuru ancestors and long posterity
Who all must give consent.

Vāsavaduttā

Thy thoughts are high.
But if thy life must find a prison here ?
My father is inflexible and stern.

Vuthsa

Dost thou desire this really in thy heart ?
Vuthsa diminished,[1] art thou not diminished[1] too ?

Vāsavaduttā

My rule thou hast vowed ?

Vuthsa

To obey thee in all things
Throned in Cowsāmbie, not as here I must,
Thy father's captive. There I shall be thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Leave, Vuthsa, leave me. Take him, Umbā from me.

---

[1] Degraded

Umbā

(*entering, in Vāsavaduttā's ear*)

Who now is bribed ? We are all traitors now.

She goes out with Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

O joy, if he and all were only mine.
O greatness to be queen of him and earth.
I grow a rebel to my father's house.

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

A room in the royal apartments.

Ungāricā; Vāsavaduttā.

Ungāricā

Thou singest well; a cry of Vuthsa's art
Has stolen into thy song.

She takes Vāsavaduttā on her lap.

Look up at me,
My daughter, let me gaze into thy eyes
And from their silence learn thy treasured thoughts.
Thou knowest I can read 'twixt human lids
The secrets of the throbbing heart ? I search
In Vāsavaduttā's eyes by what strange skill
Vuthsa has crept into my daughter's voice.
Thou keepst thy lashes lowered ? thou wilt not let me look ?
But that too I can read.

Vāsavaduttā

O mother, mother mine,
Plague me not; thou know'st all things; comfort me.

Ungāricā

Thou needest comfort ?

Vāsavaduttā

Yes, against myself
Who trouble my own heart.

Ungāricā

Why ? though I know.
Thou wilt not speak ? I'll speak then for thee.

Vāsavaduttā alarmed puts her hand over Ungāricā's mouth.

Off!
It is because thou canst not here control
What thy immortal part with rapture wills
And the mortal longingly desires; for yet
Thy proud heart cannot find the way to yield.

Vāsavaduttā

If thou knew'st, mother.

Ungāricā

No, thou hast the will
But not the art, Love's learner. O my proud
Sweet ignorance, 'tis he shall find the way
And thou shalt know the joy of being forced
To what thy heart desires. Is it enough ?

Vāsavaduttā

O mother !

She hides her face in Ungāricā's bosom.

Ungāricā

Thou hast done thy father's will ?
Thy husband shall be vassal to thy sire ?

Vāsavaduttā

Have I a father or a house ? O none,
O none, O none exists but only he.

Ungāricā

Let none exist for thee but the dear all thou lov'st.
I charge thee, Vāsavaduttā, when thou rul'st
In far Cowsāmbie, let this be thy reign
To heap on him delight and seek his good.
Raise his high fortunes, shelter from grief his heart,
Even with thy own tears buy his joy and peace,
Nor let one clamorous thought of self revolt
Against him.

Vāsavaduttā

Mother, thou canst see my heart;
Is this not there ? Can it do otherwise,
Being thus conquered, even if it willed ?

Ungāricā

Child, 'tis my care to give thy heart a voice
And bind it to its nobler loving self.
Let this be now thy pride.

Vāsavaduttā

It is, it is.
But, mother, it is very sweet to rule,
And if I rule him for his good, not mine ?

Ungāricā

Thou canst not be corrected ! Queenling, rule.
Go now; thy brother comes.

Vāsavaduttā escapes towards her own apartments; Vicunra enters from the outer door.

Why is thy brow
A darkness ?

Vicurna

Wherefore was King Vuthsa brought
Into Ujjayinie? why is captive kept?

Ungāricā

Thy father's will, who knows?

Vicurna

But I would know.

Ungāricā

Him ask.

Vicurna
(*taking her face between his hands*)

I ask thee; thou must answer.

Ungāricā

To wed
Thy sister.

Vicurna

Let him wed and be released.
Our fame is smirched; the city murmurs. War
Threatens from Vuthsa's nation and our cause
Is evil.

Ungāricā

Wedding her he must consent
To be our vassal.

Vicurna

Thus are vassals made?

Thus empires built? This is a shameful thing.
Release him first, then with proud war subdue.

Ungāricā

Thou knowest thy father's stern, unbending will
Whom we must all obey.

Vicurna

Not I, or not
In evil things.

Ungāricā

Respect thy father! He
Will not, unsatisfied, release his foe.
Demand not this.

Vicurna

I will release him then.

Ungāricā

Him by what right who is thy house's peril?

Vicurna

He is a hero and he is my friend.

Ungāricā

Didst thou not help to bring him captive here?

Vicurna

For Vāsavaduttā. I will bear them both
Out from the city in my chariot far
Into the freedom of the hills. I will hew down
All who oppose me.

Ungāricā

Rash and violent boy,
So wilt thou make bad worse. Await the hour
When Vuthsa shall himself demand thy aid.

Vicurna

The hour will come?

Ungāricā

He will be free.

Vicurna

Then soon,
Or I myself will act.

He goes out.

Ungāricā

This too is well
And most that the proud chivalries of old
Are not yet dead in all men's hearts. O God
Shiva, thou mak'st me fortunate in my sons.

SCENE 2

Vāsavaduttā's chamber.

Vuthsa; Vāsavaduttā.

Vuthsa

Thy hands have yet no cunning with the strings.
'Tis not the touch alone but manner of the touch
That calls the murmuring spirit forth,—as thus.

Vāsavaduttā

I cannot manage it; my hand rebels.

Vuthsa

I will compel it then.

He takes her hand in his.

Thou dost not chide.

Vāsavaduttā

I am weary of chiding; and how rule a boy
Who takes delight in being chidden? And then
'Twas only my hand. What dost thou?

Vuthsa takes her by the arms and draws her towards him.

Vuthsa

What thy eyes
Commanded me and what for many days
My heart has clamoured for in hungry pain.

Vāsavaduttā

Presumptuous ! wilt thou not immediately
Release me ?

Vuthsa

Not till thy heart's will is done.

He draws her down on his knees, resisting.

Vāsavaduttā

What will ? I did not bid. What will ? Vuthsa !
Vuthsa ! I did not bid. This is not well.

He masters her and holds her on his bosom. Her head falls on his shoulder.

Vuthsa

O my desire, why should we still deny
Delight that calls to us ? Strive not with joy,
But yield me the sweet mortal privilege
That makes me equal with the happiest god
In all the heavens of fulfilled desire.
O on thy sweet averted cheek ! My queen,
My wilful empress, all in vain thou striv'st
To keep from me the treasure of thy lips
I have deserved so long.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa ! Vuthsa !

He forces her lips up to his and kisses her.

Vuthsa

O honey of thy mouth ! The joy, the joy
Was sweeter. I have drunk in heaven at last,
Let what will happen.

Vāsavaduttā escapes and stands quivering at a distance.

Vāsavaduttā

Stand there ! approach me not.

Vuthsa

I thought 'twould be enough for many ages;
But 'tis not so.

Vāsavaduttā

Go from me, seek thy room.

Vuthsa

Have I so much offended ? I will go.

He pretends to go.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, I am not angry; do not go.
Sit; I must chide thee. Was this well to abuse
My kindness, to mistake indulgence—No,
I am not angry; thou art only a boy.
I have permitted thee to love because
Thou saidst thou couldst not help it. This again
Thou must not do,—not thus.

Vuthsa

Then teach me how.

Vāsavaduttā
(*with a troubled smile*)

I never had so importunate a slave.
I must think out some punishment for thee.

She comes to him suddenly, takes him to her bosom and kisses him with passion.

Vuthsa

O if 'tis this, I will again offend.

She clings to him, kisses him again, then puts him away from her.

Vāsavaduttā

Go from me, go. Wilt thou not go ? Munjoolicā !

Vuthsa

She is not here to help thee ågainst thy heart.
But I will go ; thou willst it.

Vāsavaduttā

Wilt thou leave me ?

Vuthsa

Never ! thus, thus into my bosom grow,
O Vāsavaduttā.

Vāsavaduttā

O my happiness !
O Vuthsa, only name that's sweet on earth
I have murmured to the silence of the hours,

Give me delight, let me endure thy clasp
For ever. O loveliest head on all the earth !

Vuthsa

If we could thus remain through many ages,
Nor Time grow weary ever of such bliss,
O Vāsavaduttā !

Vāsavaduttā

I have loved thee always
Even when I knew it not. Was't not the love
Secret between us, drew thee here by force,
Vuthsa ?

Vuthsa

Thou wilt not now refuse thy lips ?

Vāsavaduttā

Nothing to thee.

Vuthsa

Yes, thou shalt be my queen
Surrendered henceforth, I thy slave enthroned.
Give me the largess of thyself that I may be
The constant vassal of thy tyrant eyes
And captive of thy beauty all my days
And homage pay to thy sweet sovereign soul.
Thus, thus accept me.

Vāsavaduttā

I accept, my king,
Thy service and thy homage and thy love.
If in return the bounty of myself

I lavish on thee, will it be enough ?
Can it hold thy life as thou wilt fill all mine ?

Vuthsa

Weave thyself into morn and noon and eve.
We will not be as man and woman are
Who are with partial oneness satisfied,
Divided in our works, but one large soul
Parted in two dear bodies for more bliss.
For all my occupations thou shalt rule,
And those that take me from thy blissful shadow
Still with thy sweet remembrance shall inspired
Be done by thee.

Vāsavaduttā

If thy heart strays from me,—

Vuthsa

Never my heart…

Vāsavaduttā

If thy eyes stray from me,
O Vuthsa,—

Vuthsa

If I view all beautiful things
With natural delight, thou wilt pardon that,
Because thou wilt share the joy.

Vāsavaduttā

Then must I find
Thy beauty there.

Vuthsa

Tonight, my love, my love,
Shall we not linger heart on heart tonight ?

Vāsavaduttā

Ah, Vuthsa, no.

Vuthsa

Does not thy heart cry, yes ?
Are we not wedded ? Shall we dally, love,
Upon heaven's outskirts, nor all Paradise
This hour compel ?

Vāsavaduttā
(*faintly*)

Munjoolicā !

Vuthsa

Beloved, thy eyes
Beseech me to overcome thee with my will.

Munjoolicā entering Vuthsa releases Vāsavaduttā.

Munjoolicā

Princess !

Vāsavaduttā

Munjoolicâ ! Why camest thou ?

Munjoolicā

Calledst thou not ?

Vāsavaduttā

'Tis forgotten. Oh, I remember.
'Twas to lead Vuthsa to his prison. (*low*) Smile,
And I will beat thee ! It was all thy fault.

Munjoolicā

Oh, very little. Come, the hour is late ;
The Princess' maidens will come trooping in.
Turn not reluctant eyes behind but come.

She takes Vuthsa by both wrists and leads him out.

Vāsavaduttā

There is a fire within me and a cry.
My longings have all broken in a flood
And I am the tossed spray ! O my desire
That criest for the beauty of his limbs
And to feel all his body with thyself
And lose thy soul in his sweet answering soul,
Wilt thou not all this night be silent ? I
Will walk upon the terrace in moonlight ;
Perhaps the large, silent night will give me peace
For now 'twere vain to sleep. O in his arms !
His arms about me and the world expunged !

SCENE 3

The tower-room by the terrace.

Vuthsa asleep on a couch ; Munjoolicā.

Munjoolicā

He sleeps and now to lure my victim here.
You ! princess ! Vāsavaduttā !

Vāsavaduttā
(*approaching at the doorway*)

Didst thou call ?

Munjoolicā

Yes, to come in from moonlight to the moon.
Thou hast never seen him yet asleep.

Vāsavaduttā

He sleeps !

Munjoolicā

His curls are pillowed on one golden arm
Like clouds upon the moon. Wilt thou not see ?

Vāsavaduttā

I dare not. I will stand here and will see.

Munjoolicā

Thou shalt not. Either pass or enter in.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou playst the tyrant ? I will stand and see.

Munjoolicā
(*pushing her suddenly in*)

In with thee.

Vāsavaduttā
Munjoolicā !

Munjoolicā
Hush, wake him not !

She drags her to the couch-side.

Is he not beautiful ?

She draws back and after a moment goes quietly out and closes the door.

Vāsavaduttā
Oh, now I feel
My mother's heart when over me she bowed
Wakeful at midnight ! He has never had
Since his strange birth a mother's, sister's love.
O sleeping soul of my belovèd, hear
My vow that while thy Vāsavaduttā lives,
Thou shalt not lack again one heart's desire,
One tender bodily want. All things at once,
Wife, mother, sister, lover, playmate, friend,
Queen, comrade, counsellor I will be to thee.
Self shall not chill my heart with wedded strife,
Nor age nor custom pale my fire of love.
I have that strength in me, the strength to love of gods.

A tress of her hair falls on his face and awakens him.

Vuthsa

O Vāsavaduttā, thou hast come to me !

Vāsavaduttā

It was not I ! Munjoolicā dragged me in.
O where is she ? The door !

She hastens to the door and finds it bolted from outside.

Munjoolicā !
What is this jest ? I shall be angry. Open.

Munjoolicā
(*outside, solemnly*)

Bolted.

Vāsavaduttā
For pity, sweet Munjoolicā !

Munjoolicā

I settle my accounts. Be happy. I
Am gone.

Vāsavaduttā
Go not, go not, Munjoolicā.

Vuthsa
(*coming to her*)

She's gone, the thrice-blessed mischief, and tonight
This happy prison thou gav'st me is thine too.

Goddess ! thou art shut in with thy delight.
Why wouldst thou flee then through the doors of heaven ?

Vāsavaduttā

O not tonight ! Be patient ! I will ask
My father ; he will give me as thy wife.

Vuthsa

Thou thinkst I'll take thee from thy father's hands
Like a poor Brahmin begging for a dole ?
Not so do heroes' children wed, nor they
Who from the loins of puissant princes sprang.
With the free interchange of looks and hearts
Nobly self-given, heaven for the priest
And the heart's answers for the holy verse,
They are wedded or by wished-for violence torn
Consenting, yet resisting from the midst
Of many armèd men. So will I wed thee,
O Vāsavaduttā, so wilt bear by force
Out of the house and city of my foes
Breaking through hostile gates. By a long kiss
I'll seal thy lips that vainly would forbid.
Let thy heart speak instead the word of joy,
O Vāsavaduttā.

Vāsavaduttā

Do with me what thou wilt, for I am thine.

ACT FIVE

SCENE I

A room in Vāsavaduttā's apartments.
Vāsavaduttā ; Munjoolicā.

Vāsavaduttā

So thou hast dared to come.

Munjoolicā

I have. Thou, dare
To look me in the eyes ! Thou canst not. Then ?

Vāsavaduttā

Hast thou no fear of punishment at all ?

Munjoolicā

For shutting thee in with heaven ? none, none at all.

Vāsavaduttā

How didst thou dare ?

Munjoolicā

How didst thou dare, proud girl,
To make of kings and princesses thy slaves ?
How dare to drag Sourashtra's daughter here,
To keep her as thy servant and to load
With gifts, caresses, chidings and commands,
The puppet of thy sweet imperious will ?
Thinkst thou my heart within me was not hot ?
But now I am avenged on thee and all.

Vāsavaduttā

Vindictive traitress, I will beat thee.

Munjoolicā

Do

And I will laugh and ask thee of the night.

Vāsavaduttā

Then take thy chastisement.

She seizes and beats her with the tassels of her girdle.

Munjoolicā

Stop ! I'll bear no more.

Art not ashamed to spend thy heart in play
Knowing what thou hast done and what may come ?
Think rather of what thou wilt do against
Thy dangerous morrow.

Vāsavaduttā

See what thou hast done !

How shall I look my father in the eyes ?
What speak ? What do ? my Vuthsa how protect ?

Munjoolicā

Thy father must not know of this.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou thinkst

My joy can be shut in from every eye ?
Besides thee I have other serving girls.

Munjoolicā

None who'ld betray thee. This thing known, his wrath
Would strike thy husband.

Vāsavaduttā

Me rather. I will throw
My heart and body, twice his shield, between.

Munjoolicā

You will be torn apart and Vuthsa penned
In some deep pit or fiercer vengeance taken
To soothe the stern man's outraged heart.

Vāsavaduttā

Alas !
Thou hast a brain; give me thy counsel. The ill
Thyself hast done, must thou not remedy ?

Munjoolicā

If thou entreat me much, I will and can.

Vāsavaduttā

I shall entreat thee !

Munjoolicā

Help thyself, proud child.

Vāsavaduttā

O, if I have thee at advantage ever !
Stay ! I beseech thee, my Munjoolicā,—

Munjoolicā

More humbly !

Vāsavaduttā

Oh !

She kneels.

I clasp thy feet, O friend,
In painful earnest I beseech thee now
To think, plan, spend for my sake all thy thought.
Remember how I soothed thy fallen life
Which might have been so hard. O thou my playmate,
Joy, servant, sister who hast always been,
Help me, save him, deceive my father's wrath,
Then ask from me what huge reward thou wilt.

Munjoolicā

Nothing at all. Vengeance is sweet enough
Upon thy father and Gopālaca.
I'm satisfied now. First give me a promise;
Obey me absolutely in all things
Till Vuthsa's free.

Vāsavaduttā

I promise. Thou art my guide
And I will walk religiously thy path.

Munjoolicā

Then think it done.

Vāsavaduttā
(*smiling on Vuthsa who enters*)

Vuthsa, I asked not for thee.

Vuthsa

Thou didst. I heard thy heart demand me.

Munjoolicā

Hark !
What is this noise and laughter in the court ?
See, see, the hunchbacked laughable old man !
What antics !

Vuthsa

Surely I know well those eyes.
Munjoolicā, this is a friend. He must
Be brought here to me.

Munjoolicā

Princess, let us call him.
It is an admirable buffoon.

Vāsavaduttā

Fie on thee !
Is this an hour for jest and antics ?

Munjoolicā
(*looking significantly at her*)

Yes.

Vāsavaduttā

Call him.

Munjoolicā

And thou go in.

Vāsavaduttā

How, in !

Munjoolicā

This girl !
Hast thou not promised to obey me ?

Vāsavaduttā

Yes.

She goes in.
Munjoolicā descends.

Vuthsa

Yougundharāyan sends him. O, he strikes
The hour as if a god had planned all out.
This world's the puppet of a silent Will
Which moves unguessed behind our acts and thoughts;
Events bewildered follow its dim guidance
And flock where they are needed. Is't not thus,
O Thou, our divine Master, that Thou rulest,
Nor car'st at all because Thy joy and power
Are seated in Thyself beyond the ages ?

Munjoolicā returns bringing in Vasuntha disguised.

Who is this ancient shape thou bringest ?

Munjoolicā

I'ld know
If he has a tongue as famous as his hump
And as preposterous; that to learn I bring him.

Vasuntha

Where is the only lady of the age ?
Princes or else domestics,—

Munjoolicā

Something, sir, of both.

Vasuntha

O masters then of princes, think not that I scorn
Your prouder royalty; but now if any
Will introduce my hungry old hunchback
To Avunthie's far-famed paragon of girls,
He shall have tithe of all my golden gains.

Munjoolicā

Why not to Avunthie's governor and a prison,
Yougundharāyan's spy ?

Vasuntha
(*looking at Vuthsa*)

What's this ? What's this ?

Munjoolicā

Strong tonic for a young old man.

Vuthsa

Speak freely
Thy message; there are only friends who hear.

Vasuntha
(*to Vuthsa, with a humorous glance*)
at Munjoolicā

Thy hours were not ill-spent. But thou hast nearly
Frighted these poor young hairs to real grey,
My sportive lady. Hear now why I crouch
Beneath the hoary burden of this beard

And the insignia of a royal hump,—
And an end to jesting. Vuthsa, in thy city
The people clamour; they besiege thy ministers,
Railing at treason and demanding thee,
Nor can their rage be stilled. Do swiftly then
Whatever thou must do yet, swiftly break forth
Or war will seek thee clamouring round these doors.
To bear thy message back to him I come,
Upon Avunthie's mountain verge who lurks,
Or else to aid thee if our help thou needest.

Vuthsa

Let him restrain my army forest-screened
Where the thick woodlands weave a border large
To the ochre garment round Avunthie's loins
Nearest Ujjayinie. Under the cavern-hill
Of Lokanātha let him lie, but never
Transgress that margin till my chariot comes.

Vasuntha

'Tis all ?

Vuthsa

In my own strength all else I'll do.

Vasuntha

Good, then I go ?

Vuthsa

Yes, but with gold, thy fee,
To colour thy going. Bring him gold, dear friend,
Or take from Vāsavaduttā gem or trinket
That shall bear out his mask to jealous eyes.

Munjoolicā goes into the inner chamber.

Vasuntha

Leave that to me.

Vuthsa

Thou hast adventured much
For my sake.

Vasuntha

Poor Alurca cried to come,
But this thing asked for brains and he had only
Blunt courage and a harp. The danger's nothing,
But oh, this hump ! I shall not soon walk straight,
Nor rid myself of all the loyal aches
I bear for thee.

Vuthsa

Pangs fiercer would have chased them,
Hadst thou been caught, my friend. I shall remember.

Munjoolicā returns with gold and a trinket.

Take now these gauds; haste, make thy swiftest way,
For I come close behind thee.

Vasuntha goes.

Munjoolicā

Tell me thy plan.

Vuthsa

These chambers are too strongly kept.

Munjoolicā

But there's
The pleasure-ground.

Vuthsa

Let Vāsavaduttā call
Her brothers on an evening to the park
And wine flow fast. The nights are moonlit now.
How many gates ?

Munjoolicā

Three, but the southern portal
Nearest the ramparts.

Vuthsa

There, how many guard ?

Munjoolicā

Three armed Kirātha women keep the gate.

Vuthsa

I cannot hurt them. Thou must find a way.

Munjoolicā

They shall be drowned in wine. The streets outside ?

Vuthsa

A chariot,—find one for me. I cannot fight
With Vāsavaduttā on my breast.

Munjoolicā

I think
That I shall find one.

Vuthsa

Do it. The rest is easy,
To break the keepers of the city-gate
In one fierce moment and be out and far.
There are arms enough in the palace.

Munjoolicā

The armoury
I use sometimes.

Vuthsa

Conceal them in the grounds.
No, in the chariot let them wait for me.

Munjoolicā

Thou wilt need both thy hands in such a fight.
Vuthsa, I'll be thy charioteer.

Vuthsa

Thou canst ?

Munjoolicā

Hope not to find a better in thy realms.

Vuthsa

My battle-comrade then ! Words are not needed
Between us.

He goes out.

Munjoolica

More than that before all's done
I will be to thee. Good fortune makes hard things
Most easy ; for the god comes with laden hands.

If the strange word the queen half spoke to me
Means anything, Vicurna's car shall bear
His sister to her joy and sovereign throne.

SCENE 2

The pleasure-groves of the palace in Ujjayinie.

Gopālaca; Vuthsa; Vicurna;
at a distance under the trees Ungāricā, Vāsavaduttā and Umbā.

Gopālaca

Vuthsa, the wine is singing in my brain,
The moonlight floods my soul. These are the hours
When the veil for eye and ear is almost rent
And we can hear wind-haired Gundharvas sing
In a strange luminous ether. Thou art one,
Vuthsa, who has escaped the bars and walks
Smiling and harping to enchanted men.

Vuthsa

It was your earthly moonlight drew me here
And thou, Gopālaca, and Vindhya's hills
And Vāsavaduttā. Thou shalt drink with me
In moonlight in Cowsāmbie.

Gopālaca

Vuthsa, when ?
What wild and restlesss spirit keeps thy feet
Tonight, Vicurna ?

Vicurna

'Tis the wine. I wait.

Gopālaca

For what ?

Vicurna
(with a harsh laugh)

Why, for the wine to do its work.

Gopālaca

Where's Vāsavaduttā ? Call her to us here.
We are not happy if she walks apart.

Vicurna

There with the mother underneath the trees.

Gopālaca

Call them. Thou, Vuthsa, she and I will drink
One cup of love and pledge our hearts in wine
Never to be parted. Thou deceiv'st the days,
O lax and laggard lover.

Vuthsa

'Tis the last.
Tomorrow lights another scene.

Gopālaca

'Tis good
That thou inclin'st thy heart. My father grows
Stern and impatient. This done, all is well.

Vuthsa

All in this poor world cannot have their will ;
Its joys are bounded. I submit, it seems.
Wilt thou incline thy heart, Gopālaca ?

Gopālaca

To what ?

Vuthsa

To this fair moonlight night's result
And all that follows after.

Gopālaca

Easily
I promise that.

Vuthsa

All surely will be well.

Munjoolicā arrives from the gates ; Vicurna returning from the trees with Ungāricā, Vāsavaduttā and Umbā, goes forward to meet her.

Vicurna

Is't done ?

Munjoolicā

They sprawl half senseless near the gate.

Vicurna

Whole bound and gagged were best. Give Vutsha word.

He goes towards the gates.

Ungāricā

Munjoolicā, is it tonight ?

Munjoolicā

What, madam ?

Ungāricā
(striking her lightly on the cheek)

Vicurna rides tonight ?

Munjoolicā
He rides tonight.

Ungāricā
Let him not learn, nor any, that I knew.

She returns to the others.

Gopālaca
Come, all you wanderers. Mother, here's a cup
That thou must bless with thy fair magic hands
Before we drink it.

Ungāricā
May those who drink be one
In heart and great and loving all their days
Favoured by Shiva and by Luxmie blest
Until the end and far beyond.

Gopālaca
Drink, Vuthsa.
Three hearts meet in this cup.

Ungāricā
Who drinks this first,
He shall be first and he shall be the bond.

Gopālaca
Drink, sister Vāsavaduttā, queen of all.

Ungāricā

Queen thou shalt be, my daughter, as in thy heart,
So in thy love and fortunes.

Gopālaca

Mine the last.

Ungāricā

Thou sayest, my son, yet first mid many men.

Gopālaca

Whatever place, so in this knot 'tis found.

Ungāricā
(*embracing Vāsavaduttā closely*)

Forget not thy dear mother in thy bliss.
Gopālaca, attend me to the house,
I have a word for thee, my son.

Gopālaca

I come.

They go towards the palace.

Vuthsa

Is it the moment ?

Munjoolicā

Yonder lies the gate.

Vuthsa

Love ! Vāsavaduttā ?

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa ! Vuthsa ! speak,
What has been quivering in the air this night ?

He takes her in his arms.

Vuthsa

Thy rapt and rapture far away, O love.
Look farewell to thy father's halls.

Vāsavaduttā

Alas !
What is this rashness ? Thou art unarmed ; the guards
Will slay thee.

Vuthsa

Fear not ! Thou in my arms,
Our fates a double shield, thou hast no fear,
Nor anything this night to think or do
Save in the chariot lie between my knees
And listen to the breezes in thy locks
Whistling to thee of far Cowsāmbie's groves.

He bears her towards the gate,
Vicurna crossing him in his return.

Vicurna

Haste, haste ! all's ready.

Munjoolicā

Umbā ! Umbā ! here ?

Umbā
(*who comes running up*)

Oh, what is this ?

Vicurna

Should not this girl be bound ?

Umbā

Give rather thy commands.

Munjoolicā

Thou'lt face the wrath ?

Umbā

O, all for my dear mistress. If the King
Slays me, I shall have lived and died for her
For whom I was born.

Munjoolicā

Hide in the groves until
Thou hearst a rumour growing from the walls,
Then seek the house and save thyself. Till then
Let no man find thee.

Umbā

I will lose myself
In the far bushes. O come safely through.
Could you not have trusted me in this ?

Munjoolicā

Weep not !
I'll have thee to Cowsāmbie if thou live.

Vicurna

Come, follow, follow. He is near the gates.

Munjoolicā

I to my freedom, she her royal crown !

SCENE 3

Vāsavaduttā's apartment.

Mahasegn ; Ungāricā ; Umbā bound ; armed women.

Mahasegn

She is not here.   O treachery ! If thou
Wert privy to this, thou shalt die impaled
Or cloven in many pieces.

Umbā

                                        I am resigned.

Ungāricā

Thou'lt stain thy soul with a woman's murder, King ?

Mahasegn

'Tis truth; she is too slight a thing to crush.
Are not the gardens searched ? Who are these slaves
Who dare to loiter ? If he's seized, he dies.

Ungāricā

Wilt thou make ill much worse,—if this be ill ?

Mahasegn

How say'st thou ? 'Tis not ill ? My house is shamed,
My pride downtrodden; all the country laughs
Already at the baffled Mahasegn
Whose daughter was plucked out by one frail boy
From midst his golden city and his hosts
Unnumbered. Who shall honour me henceforth ?
Who worship ? Who obey ? Who fear my sword ?

Ungāricā

Cowsāmbie's king has kept the Aryan law,
Nor is thy daughter shamed at all in this,
But taken with noblest honour.

Mahasegn

'Tis a law
I spurn. My will is trodden underfoot,
My pride which to preserve or to avenge
Is the warrior's righteousness. Udayan dies.
Or if he reach his capital, my hosts
Shall thunder on and blot it into flame,
A pyre for his torn dishonoured corpse.

Ungāricā

Hast thou forgotten thy daughter's heart ? Her good,
Her happiness are nothing then to thee ?

Mahasegn

Is she my daughter ? She'll not wish to live,
Her sire's dishonour.

Ungāricā

Thinkest thou he seized her,
Her heart consenting not ?

Mahasegn

If it be so
And she thus rebel to my will and blood,
Let her eyes gaze upon their sensuous cause
Of treason mocked with many marring spears.

Ungāricā

Art thou an Aryan king and threatenest thus?
Thy daughter only for thyself was loved?

Mahasegn

Silence, my queen! Chafe not the lion wroth.

Ungāricā

The tiger rather, if this mood thou nurse.

A Kirātha woman enters.

Mahasegn

Thou com'st, slow slave!

Kirāthie

King, all the grounds are searched.
The guards lie gagged below the southern gate;
All's empty.

Mahasegn

Where's Gopālaca? He too
Has leisures!

Kirāthie

There's a captain from the walls.

Mahasegn

Ha! bring him.

The Kirāthie brings in the Avunthian captain.

Well!

Captain

Vuthsa has broken forth.
The wardens of the gate are maimed or dead;
Triumphant, bearing Vāsavaduttā, far
Exults his chariot o'er the moonlit plains.

Mahasegn

O bitter messenger ! Pursue, pursue !

Captain

Rébha with his armed men and stern-lipped speed
Is hot behind.

Mahasegn

Let all my force that keeps
Ujjayinie, be hurled after them, one speed.
Call, call Vicurna; let the boy bring back
First fame of arms today in Vuthsa slain,
His sister's ravisher.

Captain

Let not my words
Offend my king. 'Twas Prince Vicurna's car
Bore forth his sister and Vicurna's self
Rode as her guard.

Mahasegn
(*after an astonished pause*)

Do all my house, my blood
Revolt against me ?

Captain

The princess Bundhumathie,

Thy daughter's serving maiden, at Vuthsa's side
Controlled his coursers.

Mahasegn

Her I do not blame,
Yet will most fiercely punish. Captain, go;
Gather my chariots; let them gallop fast
Crushing these fugitives' new-made tracks.

As the captain departs, Gopālaca enters.

Gopālaca,
Head, son, my armies; bear thy sister back
Before irrevocable shame is done,
Nor with thy father's greatness unavenged return.

Gopālaca

My father, hear me. Though quite contrary
To all our planned design this thing has fallen,
Yet no dishonour tarnishes the deed,
But as a hero with a hero's child
Has Vuthsa seized the girl. We planned a snare,
He by a noble violence answers us.
We sought to bribe him to a vassal's state
Dangling the jewel of our house in front;
He keeps his freedom and enjoys the gem.
Then since we chose the throw of dice and lost,
Let us be noble gamblers, like a friend
Receive God's hostile chance, nor house blind wounded thoughts
As common natures might. Sanction this rapt;
Let there be love 'twixt Vuthsa's house and us.

Mahasegn

I see that in their hearts all have conspired
Against my greatness. Thou art Avunthie's prince,
My second in my cares. Hear then ! if 'twixt
Ujjayinie and my frontiers they are seized,
My fiercer will shall strike; but if they reach
Free Vindhya, thou thyself shalt make the peace.
Take Vāsavaduttā's household and this girl,
Take all her wealth and gauds; lead her thyself
Or follow to Cowsāmbie, but leave not
Till she is solemnised as Vuthsa's queen.
Sole let her reign throned by Udayan's side;
Then only shall peace live betwixt our realms.

Gopālaca

And I will fetch Vicurna back.

Mahasegn

Son, never.
I exile the rebel to his name and house.
Let him with Vuthsa whom he chooses dwell,
My foeman's servant.

He goes out, followed by the guards.
Gopālaca unbinds Umbā.

Ungāricā

If we give his rage its hour,
'Twill sink. His pride will call Vicurna back,
If not the father's heart.

Gopālaca

Haste, gather quickly

Her wealth and household. I would make earliest speed,
Lest Vuthsa by ill hap be seized for ill.

Ungāricā

Fear not, my son. The hosts are not on earth
That shall prevail against these two in arms.

SCENE 4

The Avunthian forests; moonlight.

Vuthsa; Vāsavaduttā; Munjoolicā.

Vuthsa

Thou hast held the reins divinely. We approach
Our kingdom's border.

Munjoolicā

But the foe surround.

Vuthsa

We will break through as twice now we have done.
Vicurna comes.

Vicurna arrives ascending.

Vicurna

Vuthsa, yon Rébha asks
For parley; is it given ? I'ld hold him here
While by a long masked woodland breach I know
Silent we pass their cordon.

Vuthsa

Force is best.

Vicurna

Vuthsa, to my mind more; but I would spare
Our Vāsavaduttā's heart these fierce alarms.
Though she breathes nothing, yet she suffers.

Vuthsa

Good !

We'll choose thy peaceful breach.

Vicurna descends.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, if I
Stood forth and bade their leader cease pursuit,
Since of my will I go, he must desist.

Vuthsa

It would diminish, love, my victory
And triumph which are thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Then let it go.
I would not stain thy fame in arms, though over
My house's head its wheels go trampling.

Munjoolicā
(*yawning*)

Ough!
If we could parley a truce for sleep. This fighting
Makes very drowsy.

Vicurna returns with Rébha.

Vuthsa

Well, captain, thy demand!

Rébha

Vuthsa, thou art environed. Dost thou yield?

Vuthsa

Thou mock'st ! Return; we'll break the third last time
Thy fragile chain. Are thy dead counted ?

Rébha

The living
Outnumber their first strength; more force comes on
Fast from Ujjayinie. Therefore yield the princess.
Thyself depart a freeman to thy realms.

Vuthsa

Know'st thou thy offer is an insolence ?

Rébha

Then, Prince, await the worst. Living and bound
Or else a corpse we'll bring thee back to our city.
Three times around thee is my cordon passed,
Thy steeds are spent, nor hast thou Urjoon's quiver.
The dawn prepares; think it thy last.

Vuthsa

At noon
I give thee tryst within my borders.

Rébha goes.

Vicurna

Swift !
Before he reach his men and back ascend,
We must be far. Munjoolicā, mount my horse,
Ride to Yougundharāyan, bid him bring on
His numbers; for I see armies thundering towards us
With angry speed o'er the Avunthian plains.
I'll guide the car.

Munjoolicā

The horse ?

Vicurna

Bound in yon grove.
Rein lightly; he's high-mettled.

Munjoolicā

Teach me not.
There is no horse yet foaled I cannot ride.
Which is my way through all this leafy tangle ?

She goes towards the grove.

Vicurna

Thou canst not miss it; for yon path leads only
To Lokanātha's hill beyond our borders.
Now on !

Vuthsa

The moonlight and the glad night-winds
Have rustled luminously among the leaves
And sung me wordless paeans while I fought.
Now let them fall into a rapturous strain
Of silence, while I ride with thee safe clasped
Upon my bosom.

Vāsavaduttā

If I could hold thee safe at last !

SCENE 5

On the Avunthian border.

Roomunwath; Yougundharāyan; Alurca; soldiers.

Roomunwath

The dawn with rose and crimson crowned the hills,
There was no sign of Vuthsa's promised wheels.
Another noon approaches.

Yougundharāyan

Two days only
Vasuntha's here. Yet is Udayan swift
With the stroke he in a secret sloth prepares.

Roomunwath

We learned that though too late. A secret rashness,
A boy's wild venture with his life for stake
And a kingdom ! Dangerously dawns this reign.

Alurca

See, see, a horseman over Avunthie's edge
Rides to us. He quests forward with his eyes.

Roomunwath

Whoe'er he be, he has travelled far. His beast
Labours and stumbles on.

Yougundharāyan

This is no horseman,
It is a woman rides though swift and armed.

Alurca

She has seen us and dismounts.

Yougundharāyan

A woman rides !
My mind misgives me. Is't some evil chance ?
Comes she a broken messenger of grief ?
She runs as if pursued.

Alurca

She's young and fair.

Munjoolicā arrives.

Munjoolicā

Art thou king Vuthsa's captain ?

Roomunwath

I am he.

Munjoolicā

Gather thy force; for Vuthsa drives here fast,
But hostile armies surge behind his wheels.
Fast, fast, into the woods your succour bring,
Lest over his wearied coursers and spent quiver
Numbers and speed prevail.

Yougundharāyan

Roomunwath, swift.

Roomunwath goes.

But who art thou and where shall be my surety
That thou art no Avunthian sent to lure
Our force into an ambush ?

Munjoolicā

This is surely
Yougundharāyan of the prudent brain.
Thy question I reply; the rest resolve
But swiftly, lest Fate mock thy wary thoughts.
My name is Bundhumathie and my father
Sourashtra held; but I, his daughter, taken
Served in Avunthie Vāsavaduttā. Knowest thou
This ring ?

Yougundharāyan

'Tis Vuthsa's.

Munjoolicā

Young Vicurna's bay
I rode, who guards his sister's ravisher
Against the angry rescuers. Will these riddles,
Wisest of statesmen, solve thy cautious doubt ?

Yougundharāyan

Thy tale is strange; but thou at least art true.

Munjoolicā

Thou art not prudent only !

Yougundharāyan

Forward then.
Roomunwath's camp already is astir.

SCENE 6

Near the edge of the forest in Avunthie.

Roomunwath; Yougundharāyan; Alurca; Munjoolicā; forces.

Roomunwath

Stay, stay our march; 'tis Vuthsa's car arrives.
The tired horses stumble as they pause.

Yougundharāyan

There is a noise of armies close behind
And out of woods the Avunthian wheels emerge.

There arrive Vuthsa, Vicurna, Vāsavaduttā.

Vuthsa

My father, all things to their hour are true
And I bring back my venture. Am I pardoned
Its secrecy ?

Yougundharāyan

My pupil and son no more,
But hero and monarch! Thou hast set thy foot
Upon Avunthie's head.

Vuthsa

Yet still thy son.

Yougundharāyan

Hail, Vāsavaduttā, great Cowsāmbie's queen.

Vāsavaduttā
(*smiling happily on Vuthsa*)

My crown was won by desperate alarms.

Vuthsa.

It was a perilous race and in the end
Fate won by a head. Were it not the difficult paths
Baffled their numbers, we were hardly here,
So oft we had to pause and rest our steeds.
But in less strength they dared not venture on.

Yougundharāyan

They range their battle now.

Vuthsa

Speak thou to them.
War must not break.

Yougundharāyan

Demand a parley there.

Vuthsa

If we must fight, it shall be for defence
Retreating while we war unless they urge
Too far their violent trespass.

Vicurna

Rébha comes.

Rébha arrives.

Rébha

Ye are suitors for a parley ?

Vicurna

Rébha, with beaten men.

Rébha

Because you had your sister in the car
Our shafts were hampered.

Vicurna

Nor could with swords prevail
Against two boys so many hundred men.

Rébha

O Prince Vicurna, what thou hast done today
Against thy name and nation, I forbear
To value. 'Tis thy first essay of arms.

Vicurna

Well dost thou not to weigh thy better's deeds.

Yougundharāyan

Rébha, wilt thou urge vainly yet this strife ?
What hitherto was done, was private act
And duel; now if thou insist on fight,
Two nations are embroiled; and to what end ?

Rébha

I will take Vuthsa and the Princess back.
It is my king's command.

Yougundharāyan

The impossible
No man is bound to endeavour. While we fight,
King Vuthsa with the captive princess bounds
Unhindered to his high-walled capital.

Rébha

It is my king's command. I am his arm

And not his counsellor; nor to use my brain
Have any right, save for the swift way to fulfil
His proud and absolute mandate.

Yougundharāyan

If there came
Word from Ujjayinie, then pursuit must cease ?

Rébha

Then truly.

Yougundharāyan

Send a horseman, Rébha, ask,
All meanwhile shall remain as now it stands.

Rébha

I'll send no horseman; I will fight.

Yougundharāyan

Then war !

Rébha

We fear it not. This is strange insolence
To stand in arms upon Avunthian ground
And issue mandates to the country's lords.

He is going.

Roomunwath

Rébha, yet pause! No messenger thou needst.
Look where yon chariot furious bounding comes
And over it streams Avunthie's royal flag.

Rébha

It is the prince Gopālaca. Of this I am glad.

Vāsavaduttā

O if my brother comes, then all is well.

Vuthsa

For thou art Luxmie. Thou beside me, Fate
And Fortune, peace and battle must obey
The vagrant lightest-winged of my desires.

Gopālaca arrives; with him Umbā.

Gopālaca

Hail, Vuthsa! peace and love between our lands!

Vuthsa

I hold them here incarnate. Welcome thou
Their strong achiever.

Gopālaca

As earnest and as proof
Receive this fair accomplice of thy flight
Unpunished. Sister, take her to thy arms.

Vāsavaduttā

O Umbā, thou com'st safe to me!

Gopālaca

And all
My sister's household and her wealth comes fast
Behind me. Only one claim Avunthie keeps;

My sister shall sit throned thy only queen,—
Which, pardon me, my eyes must witness done
With honour to our name.

Vuthsa

Cowsāmbie's majesty
Will brook not even in this Gopālaca,
A foreign summons. Surely my will and love
Shall throne most high, not strong Avunthie's child
But Vāsavaduttā; whether alone, her will
And mine, the nation and the kingdom's good
Consenting shall decide. Therefore this claim
Urge not, my brother.

Gopālaca

Let not this divide us.
The present's gladness is enough; the future's hers
And thine, Udayan, nor shall any man
Compel thee. Boy, thy revolt was rash and fierce
Wronging thy house and thy high father's will.
Exiled must thou in far Cowsāmbie dwell
Until his wrath is dead.

Vicurna

I care not, brother.
I have done my will, I have observed the right.
Near Vuthsa and my sister's home enough
And I shall see new countries.

Vuthsa

Follow behind,
Gopālaca; thy sister's household bring
And all the force thou wilt. We speed in front.
Ride thou, Alurca, near us; let thy harp

Speak of love's anthems and her golden life
To Vāsavaduttā. Love, the storm is past,
The peril o'er. Now we shall glide, my queen,
Through green-gold woods and between golden fields
To float for ever in a golden dream,
O earth's gold Luxmie, till the shining gates
Eternal open to us thy heavenly home.

Vuthsa

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Will brook not even in this, Gopalaca,
A foreign summons. Surely my will and love
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